State Government Victoria

Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Every child, every opportunity

Speak up!

REPRESENT!

An SRC resource kit for students and teachers

Get involved!

Lead!

Victorian Student Representative Council

Student foreword

Student Representative Councils (SRCs) are continually changing. This is necessary for them to remain a strong voice for young people in schools. As society embraces new technologies, teachers embrace new teaching methods and students embrace new pathways and opportunities in their education, SRCs must also embrace new forward-thinking strategies.

Dynamic SRCs represent the views of a cross-section of students from different year levels, cultures, backgrounds and talents. A broad spectrum of views and values held by the student body enhances representatives' understanding of issues that are important to young people.

SRCs should be active not only within their school, but also in their community. The work they undertake should include broader work within their communities. While working within their school, the SRC may contribute to policy development on issues such as student engagement and curriculum. On a wider level, they may be consulted by their local council as a representative voice for young people.

On an individual level, students involved in SRCs can learn immensely from their experiences. SRCs can teach young people to be confident in public speaking, presenting and communicating with others, building on those skills learnt in the classroom.

SRCs give students the skills to create and to implement, to lead and to follow, to learn from mistakes and to succeed. Most importantly, they give students the opportunity to represent the views of their peers, and to succeed in making those views heard.

It is with great pleasure that the VicSRC presents this resource to you – be you a student or teacher – to support you in your endeavour of representing the views of students at your school and in encouraging student voice.

We hope that you use this resource as a guide, and not a rule book – the needs of all SRCs are different, and it is up to each SRC to decide what works for them. When used alongside support from the VicSRC, this resource is a powerful tool to strengthen student representation. We hope you find it valuable.

Michael Kurtanjek
VicSRC Student Executive 2008–10
On behalf of the Victorian Student Representative Council

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This kit

This kit has been produced by the Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) to provide information and ideas for student representative councils (SRCs) in secondary schools throughout Victoria.

> **WARNING:** *This kit will create change.* **It contains practical advice about how student participation through SRCs can be made more effective in your school.**

Kit structure

The kit moves from introductory ideas (*Part 1: Setting up an SRC*) to beginning ideas (*Part 2: Getting started*), followed by moving along ideas (*Part 3: The SRC at work*), and finally discusses ideas about skills and development (*Part 4: What an SRC needs*).

Who is the kit for?
For students and teachers

Some of the material in this kit will be of greater relevance to students on SRCs, while other parts will be of more relevance to teachers supporting SRCs. Nonetheless, it's a good idea for both SRC members and support teachers to have an understanding of the material this kit contains. Both students and teachers will find the starting points for using the kit in the next section helpful.

For students who are new to SRCs and more experienced SRC students

Some of the material will be more relevant to those that are new to SRCs: students and teachers starting the journey with their SRC. We have highlighted key points for students who are new to SRCs to consider within some sections.

Other material will be more relevant for more experienced SRC students: those who have been working in SRCs before. We have also highlighted points for these students (and teachers) to think about.

For readers and doers

Examples

Quotes

Training activities

Handouts and question prompts

PowerPoint displays

Some of the material in the kit is presented for you to read. This could be taken away by individual students and teachers, or read and discussed as a group exercise. In these sections, there are:

Examples: stories from current and past SRCs.

Quotes: from SRC members, teachers and resources.

Other material in the kit is meant to be used by the SRC in its day-to-day work, or in training sessions.

This material contains:

Training activities: for you to use together as an activity

Handouts and question prompts: discussion starters that you can copy for the SRC's information and discussion

PowerPoint displays: for you to show to the SRC or others, in order to start or support discussions.

There are also documents provided for you to use and fill in as part of your SRC work:

Templates

Templates: documents for SRCs and representatives to use in meetings and guides to using them. Printed copies of these are grouped in Part 5. The templates are also available on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). You can adapt these templates to your own needs and make sure you are accessing the most up-to-date version.

Resources

Resources: extra documents that your SRC might find useful for future reference. They can be copied for use by the SRC. These are listed in Part 6 at the end of the kit and are available on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au) as .pdf documents.

Refers you to another section

Throughout, we will also refer you to sections or other documents within the kit covering the same topic.

NAVIGATION: *The icons or pictures that appear in the margins are visual prompts to support and guide your reading and use of the kit.*

A developing kit

While this kit contains lots of resources, it will need to be kept up to date. You can add new resources to the kit as you discover and develop your own ideas.

The VicSRC welcomes feedback on the use of this kit and other information that could assist SRCs in their work. Further ideas will be shared through the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au) and other VicSRC publications.

Training resources

While all the resources in this kit can and should be used for the training of SRC members, nothing beats face-to-face training sessions, especially for students and teachers who are new to SRCs.

There are several training programs, courses and organisations that may be useful for SRCs and SRC support teachers. Information about SRC training, links to other groups and useful resources are also available on the VicSRC website at www.vicsrc.org.au.

How to use this kit

Everyone associated with an SRC should find all sections of this kit useful, but we suspect that simply reading it from start to finish will not be the way to go. You'll probably find it more useful to 'dip in' and only use those parts that meet your needs. Or you might want to use the kit to challenge your SRC in areas that need new thoughts or fresh ideas.

And we should warn that there are no neat answers here. Every SRC is different and has different needs. This kit provides some options and suggests what you need to be thinking about when you set up and maintain an SRC that is appropriate to your school.

But where do you start? Here are some ideas:

Ideas for SRC members

Start by checking how you choose SRC representatives in section 1.5 and how you build representatives into an SRC team (2.1).

Look at the purpose of the SRC (2.2), why you want to be involved, and about how that changes with time (2.3). This will help you to think about the roles that can be taken by students in an SRC (2.4), as well as what representatives do (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3). You should also look at the ideas about consulting with other students (3.4).

SRC meetings need to be effective, so there are many ideas on how to do this here (3.5), including how to organise events (3.7) and how to get and manage the resources you need (4.1).

Finally, you should look at ideas about solving problems and dealing with conflict (4.4).

Ideas for SRC support teachers

Support teachers might start by looking at their roles within the SRC. Section 1.6 has ideas about this role and about ways of selecting the support teacher, which are followed up in sections 2.4 and 3.5. The ideas about SRC phases (2.3) might also be useful background for planning the common SRC purposes (2.2) and the year's roles (2.4).

There are important roles for SRC support teachers in negotiating and overseeing credit and recognition (4.3) as well as in links to school decision-making (3.9).

Ideas for those starting off an SRC

Look at the beginning sections, particularly 1.1: SRCs: What are they? Why have one? and 1.2: What can SRCs do? Follow by reading section 1.3 about establishing an SRC, covering some of the questions you need to be asking before you look in more detail at 1.4 about structures and constitution and at 1.5 and 1.6 on SRC membership and the selection processes – for both students and support teachers.

Ideas for those reviewing an SRC

If you have had an SRC for some time, but it needs reviewing, then the sections about options for structure (1.4) and membership (1.5) might be useful starting points. You might also like to look at section 2.2 on developing the SRC's purposes and 2.3 on the phases that an SRC goes through.

The sections on SRC promotion (3.8) and using technology (4.2) provide useful ideas, as do the planning tools in sections 3.6 and 3.7.

You can use the audit tools (1.7 and 2.4) to start your review by collecting responses from students and teachers about your SRC.

Ideas for those looking for challenges and new ideas to revitalise an SRC

If your SRC is doing the same old things and feels a bit tired, it might need revitalising with some new ideas. You could start with the examples in section 1.2, followed with thinking about the phases that an SRC goes through (2.3), organising consultations with students about their ideas (3.4), and investigating the SRC's relationship to the rest of the school (3.9) and the wider community (3.10). You could set yourselves some challenges about the resourcing of the SRC (4.1), about how you can use technology to communicate and promote the SRC (3.8 and 4.2), and about the credit and recognition provided to SRC members (4.3).

1.1 SRCs: What are they? Why have one?

Most schools in Victoria have some sort of student organisation to represent and work on behalf of students. They operate under many different names, including SRCs, student forums, student councils, student leadership councils (SLCs), student voice … the list goes on. In each case, they are made up of a group of students who represent student views within the school.

In this resource, written to provide information and ideas for these groups and the teachers who advise and support them, the name student representative council (SRC) will be used. This emphasises that the basic purpose of these groups is to represent the interests and needs of students within the school.

This introductory section provides some ideas about what SRCs are and why you should have one — or more — in your school.

Why have an SRC?

There are several reasons for having an SRC, and they all have to do with students' participation in what happens within the school and its community.

Firstly, better decisions are made within a school (and elsewhere) if everyone who is affected by those decisions is involved in making them in some way. Students know things that others (teachers, parents, administrators) often don't – just as teachers and others know things that students may not. Having this knowledge available in the decision-making process will result in a wiser decision. And because students have been involved, it's more likely that the actions based on the decisions will be more effectively implemented.

When we checked with the SRC about the position of the drinking taps, we realised that we were going to put them in the wrong places. The knowledge of the students, through the SRC, saved the school a huge amount of money.
School council

Secondly, research has shown that student learning and school results are improved in schools where students are actively represented in decision-making. In particular, students' learning about being an active and informed citizen is improved when opportunities are made available for students to experience active citizenship within the school.

Students are more likely to develop a strong commitment to the community and its future if they are able and permitted to take part in determining its direction. Participation in decision-making at the school level is a means through which students are able to develop responsibility and experience the democratic process.
DEECD Guidelines for Student Participation Policy (Office for Government School Education, January 2008)

The SRC provides students with the opportunity to understand how schools operate. In turn, students are interested in their schooling and how they can make necessary changes.
Secondary College SRC

Thirdly, schools in which there is active participation by students, through SRCs and other means, are generally happier and safer places, with better relationships between all members of the school community.

> *The SRC's involvement within the Student Wellbeing Committee has made all the difference. We have worked with the SRC to set up peer-support relationships within the school, identified areas where students feel safe and unsafe, and started to tackle bullying in meaningful ways.*
> **Student wellbeing coordinator**

Finally, it's recognised internationally that young people have a right to be consulted and to have their voices heard about decisions that affect them. This is stated in the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) and Australia has signed up to this convention.

> *States/Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.*
> **Article 12, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1990**

But remember...

> *Student councils succeed only if schools have a vision of students as active partners in their own education rather than just as recipients of it. Student councils can never succeed in an unfriendly undemocratic environment. Research shows that genuine democracy in schools generates powerful motivation and commitment. Student councils can promote the social inclusion of those students who are most likely to give up on themselves as learners and to feel alienated from the school.*
>
> *But students are not fooled by a kind of tokenism that simply goes through the motions of participation. Creating a school that has a positive ethos of student participation requires staff to take the opinions of students seriously, to listen to their views and to act upon them where possible. This is much more likely to happen where everyone is aware that student participation is one of the main aims of the school.*
> **Clay, Gold and Hannam: Secondary school councils toolkit, School Councils UK, 2001**

Why have an SRC?

Better decisions
- students know things that others don't
- decisions will be more effectively implemented

Improved **student learning** and **school results,** including:
- improved learning about active citizenship
- improved engagement with learning

Happier and **safer** school: better relationships within the school

Students have **the right to be consulted** and have their voices heard about decisions that affect them: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC)

An effective SRC?

Educational: Students develop skills in areas such as representation, communication and organisation.

Democratic: All students have a voice and are listened to.

Responsible and trusted: Students have responsibility for real issues; they are trusted to solve real problems and make real decisions.

Collaborative: Students are partners in decision-making with the school leadership team, teachers, parents and the school community.

Respectful: Mutual respect develops between students and all members of the school community.

Caring: Students are committed to their school and care about what happens to it and in it; students care for each other.

Rewarding: Participation is enjoyable and delivers successful outcomes.

ATTENTION: This kit is based on these ideas. Each section has practical advice about how student participation through SRCs can be made more effective in your school.

Effective SRCs

Teachers and students talk about effective and ineffective SRCs[1]

?

What teachers say

School life

- The school is a more positive, listening and friendly environment.
- Students become more aware of the organisation of the school and who's responsible for what.
- Mutual respect develops between staff and students.
- Not so much 'them and us'. Students are on our side — therefore get it right more quickly.
- Academic achievement is enhanced.

Personal development

- Staff and students have a greater sense of feeling valued.
- Students gain confidence and higher self-esteem.
- Students develop a sense of responsibility. For instance, Year 11s give very mature advice to Year 7s about homework.
- SRCs provide a platform for students to air views and grievances. They become more articulate and develop listening skills.
- Students become involved in, and proficient at, decision-making.
- Students have avoided exclusion by becoming involved in the SRC.

What students say

School life

- School life is better and everyone feels part of the school.
- Communication improves and we have opportunities to voice opinions and sort out problems. Students and teachers are able to see things from each other's point of view.
- We learn to understand and respect everyone's opinions, and to accept the need for compromise.
- We have responsibility for handling matters, and can finalise issues and see decisions through to their conclusions.
- Teamwork skills develop between students, staff and the outside community.
- Students gain experience in running meetings.
- It provides good preparation for life beyond school.

[1] Structure and quotes adapted from Clay, Gold and Hannam, Secondary School Councils Toolkit, School Councils UK, p. 13.

Ineffective SRCs

What teachers say

School life

- The SRC needs to become part of the culture of the school and have a higher profile.
- Students don't feel the SRC is taken seriously by the principal or valued by members of staff.
- Some staff have a fear of giving too much power to students.
- Students don't feel much is achieved and feel let down when things don't work.

Structure and organisation

- Students don't set the agenda.
- Over-dependency on year-level coordinators.
- Use of curriculum time has not been properly discussed with staff.

What students say

Status of the SRC in the school

- The SRC has no real aim – it has no profile and SRC business is not a priority.
- Staff don't believe the SRC is important and tend to dismiss issues.
- The SRC is not consulted when the school makes big decisions. Things have been banned without consulting students.
- Things the SRC asks for get turned down – no follow-up to find out what has happened.

Practical problems

- The SRC should be run by the students but tends to be run by the support teacher.
- Meetings every half-term are not frequent enough to get things done.
- News bulletins are not always read out to students – homeroom teachers need reminding.
- There is not enough time for SRC representatives to report back. Homeroom teachers tend to say, 'That can wait until next time'.
- Members of staff don't know when and where SRC meetings are held.
- The SRC has no budget and no treasurer – unclear about how much money is available for SRC use.

Lack of interest among students

- Students are not always interested. The SRC is given a 15-minute timeslot once a week in homerooms – but no one listens.
- Students don't want to be involved: 'too much work', 'a nerdy thing to do'.
- Some students on the SRC don't get their views across: discussions 'go nowhere'.

ATTENTION: Do these comments about ineffective SRCs sound like your SRC? This kit will help you make your SRC more effective.

1.2 What can SRCs do?

Student representative councils (SRCs) work to represent students' interests and needs in various ways. They take action to bring about positive changes that will benefit the students and the whole school community.

The SRC should be the voice of the student body, and a method for students to communicate with the school's decision-makers. Ideally, the SRC should play a part in that decision-making process ... after all, the students will be affected by all decisions the school makes. But what can SRCs actually work on? This section provides a general introduction to the sorts of things that SRCs do, and how to approach them.

About what?

Everything that happens within a school affects students. Therefore an SRC should be able to discuss, debate and help to decide on a broad range of areas: facilities, rules, curriculum, student wellbeing, etc.

Many SRCs are very efficient at raising money for various causes. Unfortunately, they often do little else. So an image develops that this is what SRCs do. SRCs can (and should) do more than just hold cake stalls for charity!

We need to say bluntly: fundraising is not and should not be the main focus of the SRC!

While contributions to charity can be part of what an SRC does (and can allow students to have a good time, get the SRC established both financially and in terms of its reputation, and give valuable experience in event organisation and coordination), the SRC has a broader representative role. (It might even be necessary to limit the fundraising role of your SRC, or to set up a special fundraising subcommittee so that the rest of the SRC can get on with other important matters.)

The SRC should enable students to have input on important school issues, such as rules and administration, curriculum, student wellbeing and buildings and grounds.

Your school probably has various committees that deal with decision-making around the school. These can include the school council, buildings committee, curriculum committee and wellbeing committee. (Some schools don't have all of these, and some run under other names.) What are the decision-making bodies in your school? Does your SRC have a representative on any of these?

Section 2.2 offers more ideas on the discussions you could have about your SRC purpose.

ATTENTION: Your SRC needs to discuss what you want to work on each year and why these issues are suggested. What is a priority for students? What can the SRC achieve?

eg   GOOD PRACTICE   {   'The role of the SRC is to be the voice of the students, find out what students think, help make the school a better place for everyone, have an impact on decision-making in the school, including on teaching and learning and student behaviour.' (SRC)

Share in decisions on school issues

Examples
- School structure and administration
- School rules, including uniforms
- Teaching and learning
- School facilities, buildings and grounds
- Student wellbeing

Build relationships and community school spirit

Examples
- Lunchtime activities
- Student communications: radio, newspaper, TV, internet, etc.
- Peer support, tutoring, mediation, etc.
- Interschool activities and forums

What can SRCs do?

Respond to student concerns and needs

Examples
- Supporting students to speak up
- Solving conflicts
- Improving student facilities
- Reporting to students
- Tackling racism, sexism, bullying and other discrimination

Bring about changes

School community
Wider community

Examples
- Student Action Teams: students act to make changes
- Raising and donating money: students support others to make changes

How do SRCs work?

SRCs start by identifying and clarifying students' interests and needs.

See **sections 2.2** and **3.4** for more on how to do this.
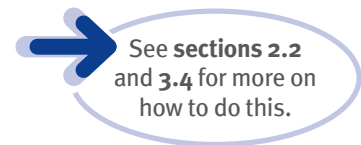
eg SRCs work in four major ways:

Ask

SRCs approach others in the school or, propose changes or improvements, and request that others take action.

GOOD PRACTICE
Students and teachers at a large secondary college had for a long time been having issues with corridor congestion and lateness due to the number of stairs they had to travel between classes … sometimes up to seven flights of stairs. The SRC brought this to the attention of the school council and buildings and grounds committee. After discussion with students (through the SRC) and teachers, the school completed the construction of a bridge between the third floors of the two main buildings. The congestion was eased and punctuality improved.

Act

SRCs take action themselves on student concerns (but usually check and obtain permission to do so) or support other groups of students to take action.

GOOD PRACTICE
The SRC worked with teachers to run workshops in the school on various topics of concern to students, including drug education, sexual harassment, racism, discrimination and healthy eating.

Share

SRCs work together in partnership with others (teachers, parents, administrators) to make joint decisions and take combined actions.

GOOD PRACTICE
Students have a place on all important committees in the school, with two students proposed by the SRC for each committee, with full voting rights. There are two students on the school council.

Students can also work in partnership with teachers and the school council when they are developing school policies, e.g. Student Engagement Policy.

Highlight

SRCs also raise awareness about student needs and concerns as a step towards either taking action or asking others to act.

GOOD PRACTICE
Concerned students worked through the SRC to identify problems around the school, including bullying in the schoolyard, inadequate toilet facilities, lack of learning resources, and timetable clashes.

ATTENTION: You will be given lots of ideas about how the SRC can ask, act, share and highlight.

See **section 3.9: Links to school decision-making** for ideas about approaching the school's administration.

Training activity: SRC initiatives
To start some thinking about what your SRC can do[2]

Copy the following short stories about the possible work of SRCs for members of your SRC. Use these to start discussions in a meeting or at a training day. Start by breaking up the SRC into small groups, with each group taking one story.

For each story, ask:
• Is this an area that our SRC might be involved with? Why?
• If so, how might our SRC work on this topic?

Someone in each group should take notes. Report back to the whole meeting. Then write your own story of what your SRC wants to work on and how it might act.

Teaching and learning in Year 9

The school is reviewing the Year 9 curriculum: what is taught and how it's taught. Teachers are aware of some dissatisfaction from students about the current curriculum, but aren't hearing specific details. The principal approaches the SRC and asks for their input. After discussing the ideas, the SRC asks the Years 9 and 10 representatives to have a discussion with their home groups about what is being taught in Year 9 and how it's taught. The SRC sets up a 'Year 9 Curriculum Group' with several other students as members, including some students who are critical of what is happening and say they are 'bored' at school. This group reports to the SRC and the principal.

Improving the toilets

Following complaints from students – and from the cleaners – the SRC decides to take action to improve the toilets. They start by organising a student survey about students' concerns and about what facilities are needed in the toilets. The SRC is interested to find out what causes people to vandalise the toilets, who is involved in this, and when students think most of the damage occurs. They ask each year level to discuss the problems and report back through their representative. Several year levels suggest that the SRC representatives should monitor what happens in the toilets over a short time period, to gather more facts about the situation.

Improving the canteen food

When some students complain about the food in the canteen, the SRC decides to do something about it. A healthy foods subcommittee is set up and this group carries out a survey at lunchtime, asking students what they think of the food and how it could be improved.

They meet the canteen manager to discuss the results. The canteen manager agrees to work with them to plan a new menu that will offer more of what students are asking for. The SRC organises a special lunch early the following term to publicise the new healthy menu. Students are encouraged to buy food from the canteen instead of bringing packed lunches, and the teachers are invited to join in as well.

Fundraising for a cause

An SRC makes a decision to sponsor a school student in Cambodia. To raise money, the SRC organises an event to take place during lunchtime. The SRC chooses students to design a sponsorship form and posters for the school. Year-level representatives announce the event in their homerooms or year-level assemblies. The SRC writes to the school council and to local businesses requesting sponsorship and contacts the local newspaper, which does a story about the event. They raise enough money to pay the cost of the education of their sponsored student for a year.

1.3 Establishing an SRC

Establishing an SRC is a process that shouldn't be taken for granted. Simply rounding up the 'usual suspects' will compromise the quality and quantity of what the SRC can achieve. You need to plan a process to get an SRC up and running, and this process starts by talking about what you want your SRC to do and be like, what sorts of SRC members you want, and then how you will get them. Even then, a thorough election process filling all positions in your school's ideal structure might not result in a well-functioning SRC if you don't take the time to settle in as a group and agree on how best to work together.

This section introduces you to some of the questions you will need to ask and some of the answers you will need to develop. It leads on to the next few sections dealing with each of these areas in more detail.

Students that are new to the SRC
It might be the first time you've had an SRC in your school, or there might be an existing SRC and it's the first time you have been involved. These are the questions you will need to be asking as you start your journey.

More experienced SRC students
Even if you have been associated with an SRC for some time, and your SRC seems to be functioning well, it's valuable to revisit these questions to make sure that you are all clear about the basic ideas involved in establishing an SRC.

For both groups
Use the question prompts on the next page to start some discussions around the school with students and with teachers.

Question prompts: Thinking about establishing an SRC?

We want our SRC to be a **purposeful SRC:**	Why do you have an SRC? Why do you want one in your school? What do you want it to do? What is possible?
We want our SRC to be a **representative SRC:**	Does the SRC represent all the students? How many students does your school have? How will the SRC most effectively represent them all?
We want our SRC to be a **well-structured SRC:**	Which groups of students need to be represented? What groupings do students naturally identify with: year levels? Subject choices? If you are electing your SRC, what will be the 'electorates'?
We want our SRC to be a **diverse SRC:**	Is the SRC inclusive of the diverse student population in your school?
We want our SRC to be an **effective SRC:**	What does your SRC want to achieve? Will this require lots of students for different roles?
We want our SRC to be a **practical SRC:**	How many students should be on the SRC? What is the best size for it to operate well as a group? If you need to keep the group sizes practical — many SRCs have found that 15–25 students is ideal for any one SRC group — does this mean that, in a larger school, you need to break into smaller groups?
We want our SRC to be a **supported SRC:**	How much support is there for the SRC? How much student enthusiasm? How much teacher support is available?

We will discuss these issues in more detail in the following sections, but it's valuable to have some ideas as you start to establish your SRC. To follow up these questions, you can go to the following sections:

A purposeful SRC:	2.2; 2.3	**A well-structured SRC:**	1.4; 1.5	**A practical SRC:**	1.4; 1.5; 3.5
A representative SRC:	1.5; 3.1; 3.2; 3.3; 3.4; 3.6	**A diverse SRC:**	1.4; 1.5	**A supported SRC:**	1.6; 3.4; 3.8; 3.9; 4.1; 4.3.
		An effective SRC:	2.1; 2.2; 2.4; 2.5; 3.3; 3.5; 4.2; 4.4; 4.5		

1.4 Establishing SRC structures

What's the ideal structure for an effective SRC?

This section looks at some issues and alternatives for the structure of an effective SRC. You can read this when you're thinking about setting up the SRC – or come back to this information when you're reviewing how well your current structure is working.

What sort of structure?

Every school is unique and so every SRC structure should reflect the students and the school organisation that it represents: its size, student population, other structures, resources and activities, etc.; the purpose of the SRC; the nature of SRC support in the school; and the history of student participation in the school and wider community. For example, what's appropriate for a school of 250 students may not be appropriate for a school of 1500 students, or what's appropriate for a school with students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds may not be appropriate for a school with largely English-speaking background students. Some schools break into subschools or year levels. In many schools, there are different cultural groups of students.

There is no one ideal structure, but there are some common factors you should take into account in shaping your SRC. Here are some possibilities and questions you might need to ask yourself.

Basic principles

- The SRC is a student organisation, and therefore must be 'owned' by students and driven by their needs and wants. The structure must make sense to them, and be one they have 'invented' and that serves their needs.
- Issues of equity must be considered: the SRC cannot be 'captured' by one particular group in the school and lock other students out of participation. It cannot be an isolated and separated group if it's to operate with student support. It must be broadly representative of the student population of the school.
- The SRC must be practical and able to do things. This means that its size and structure must enable it to get on with its work efficiently and also reflect the amount of student and teacher time that is available to the SRC.
- The SRC must be supported: one or more staff members who are interested, accepted by the SRC and recognised by the school administration need to be provided and resourced; students also need to be provided with time and resources (eg. space, funds, training, etc.).

Reviewing your structure

You should always be evaluating your SRC practices in light of these principles, which should help you to think about how well the SRC is operating:

- Are students in control?
- Is it representative?
- Is it functioning efficiently?
- Does it have support?

Reviewing your SRC structure

Is the SRC a student-run organisation?

↓

Use the audit tool in 1.7 and the tool in 2.4 to gather information

↓

What does this show?

↓

How do the current SRC structures assist or prevent the SRC being student-run?

↓

How could we increase student responsibility for the SRC?

Is the SRC representative of students?

↓

Use the audit tool in 1.7 and the ideas in 1.5 to gather information

↓

Which students aren't adequately represented in or by the SRC?

↓

How do the current SRC structures assist or prevent the SRC being representative?

↓

How could we ensure the SRC is representative of our diverse student population?

Is the SRC practical?

↓

Use the audit tool in 1.7, the models in this section (1.4) and in 2.4 to gather information

↓

In what areas is the SRC ineffective and not operating well?

↓

How do the current SRC structures assist or prevent the SRC operating well?

↓

How could we improve the SRC to make it a more practical and efficient operation?

Is the SRC supported?

↓

Use the audit tool in 1.7 and the ideas in 3.3 to assess the feedback from students and others about the SRC

↓

What evidence is there of student and teacher support of the SRC?

↓

How do the current SRC structures assist or prevent the SRC being supported?

↓

How could we increase student and teacher support for the SRC?

Do we have the best possible SRC structure for our school? What SRC structures in our school would improve our SRC's work?

Good SRCs are always reflecting on and reviewing their operation, and considering possible changes to their structures. Just because 'it has always been like that' doesn't mean it has to continue that way. Likewise, just because it worked this year doesn't mean it will continue to work after the current students have left.

We next look at some general models for SRC structures. Variations within these exist, and it's possible to put together your own structure by drawing on parts of each of these models.

> In this kit we refer to the relationship of the SRC with the school council, by which we mean the governing body of the school – whether it's called a school council or a board of governors or a school board or some similar term.
>
> Please note that it is up to the school council to decide whether students are on the school council, and if so, who those students will be. If students are not represented on your school council, there are lots of other effective ways to identify and speak to key decision-makers in your school (see section 3.9).

Some models

1. Home group based model (traditional)

There is a single SRC, made up of students drawn from each class, home group or roll group. The class usually votes each year for representatives (often two, so that a girl and a boy are elected in a coeducational school, or so there is a representative and a deputy representative).

The SRC then meets regularly (weekly, fortnightly or monthly) as one team, makes decisions, usually appoints an executive (a smaller group drawn from the SRC, which meets in between main meetings to put decisions into action), and organises activities. If there are student representatives on the school council, they are drawn from the SRC.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• All classes are represented. • There is a direct link between representatives and school units, and this makes voting and reporting back easier. • The structure can encourage home group meetings, discussion and decision-making. • There are usually regularly timetabled opportunities for discussion with the student body without having to negotiate with individual teachers and classes. • The majority of staff are more likely to be aware that the SRC exists and that it's doing something.	• As soon as a school gets beyond about 400 students, appointing an SRC in this way creates a large body, which may have difficulty meeting and working together. • Some classes might not want to have representatives. • Classes or home-groups might not be the natural or best basis for appointment, because they mightn't be focused on students' action on whole-of-school issues. • Fairly small numbers of students are involved, which could lead to elitism and separation from the general student body. • It can easily lead to a popularity contest within the homeroom, or a 'dobbed-in' job with the least popular student appointed to an ineffective SRC.

Home groups → 2 Reps → SRC → SRC Executive
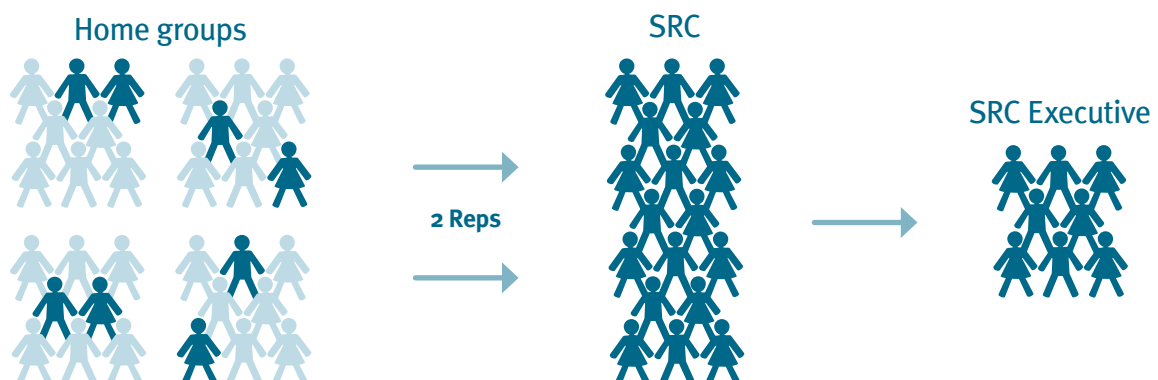
2. Subschool model

The structure is based on separate subschool SRCs. Subschools might be 'vertical units' or year levels or a junior-middle-senior breakdown, with the SRCs adopting this structure (e.g. a Junior School SRC, or a 'Red Unit SRC').

There can be a single overall coordinating SRC linking discussion and action between the subschool SRCs. A set number of students are drawn from each subschool (e.g. a whole year level votes for a group of student representatives from their year level). The subschool SRCs meet to discuss issues relevant to that subschool. They might also meet occasionally as a whole school SRC, or a smaller number of representatives appointed from each subschool can form the coordinating SRC.

Similar processes for appointing an executive and selecting proposed student representatives for the school council occur as for the first model.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• All areas of the school are represented.	• Appointment and reporting back can be more distant from students (e.g. 300 students in one year level voting for students they may not know).
• Student numbers in each group are smaller and hence meeting processes are easier.	
• More students can be involved at different levels.	• Still fairly small numbers of students are involved.
• Reporting back possibilities are easy (e.g. at assemblies).	• More open to popularity contests and to appointment of only articulate, confident students.
• Senior SRC members can play important mentoring roles with other students and groups.	• If subschools function independently, this model could isolate junior students from opportunities to learn from senior students.

Subschool A
(eg Junior)

Class Reps

Subschool A
(Junior) SRC

Subschool B
(eg Middle)

Subschool B
(Middle) SRC

Coordinating SRC

Subschool C
(eg Senior)

Subschool C
(Senior) SRC
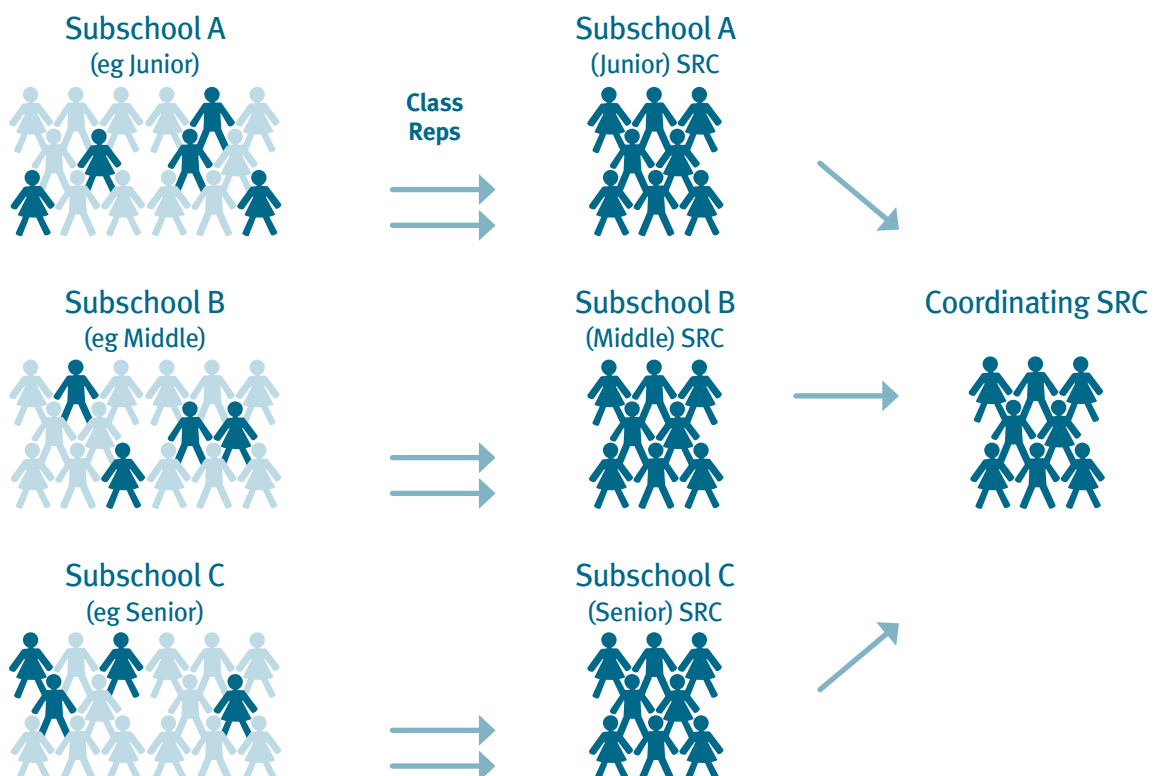
3. Working groups model

Several groups are formed by, and from, the SRC to create a larger 'student forum' structure. Students are drawn from home or class groups or subschool groups as in the previous model, but nominate for, and are appointed to, specific positions or portfolios. Therefore, students create a range of bodies according to their needs, e.g. an activities group, a canteen group, a curriculum group, a fundraising group, etc. All year levels can be represented on these groups, or some might concentrate within some year levels. The working groups can be continuing committees, short-term groups or they can also change from time to time. Working groups can also involve or coopt other students because of their expertise and interest.

A coordinating group or SRC executive also exists, and is simply one of many examples of student participation. The student forum (the whole structure) can meet alternately in whole sessions and in working groups. Proposed school council representatives can be elected directly by the whole student body, can be a specific portfolio within the student forum, or can be drawn from the executive.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Larger numbers of students can be involved. • The student structure can reflect broader school structures. • This can spread out the SRC over a range of activities and not get bogged down in one type of activity, such as social activities or fundraising. • It can involve a range of support teachers who already work in these areas. • It formalises existing activity groups within the school. (social service, canteen, sports, learning and teaching, etc.)	• It can be time-intensive for students and teachers, particularly in providing support for a range of groups. • Subgroups could lose sight of the 'big picture' and their potential place in it. • Only some students get to make the 'big decisions' of overall coordination and advocacy. • It could make ongoing or long-term projects more difficult to sustain.

Home groups

Student forum

SRC Executive

Several students from each home group appointed to various groups

Curriculum

Activities

Fundraising

Canteen

Facilities

4. Interest group model

This has similarities to the previous model, but the areas of interest and activity already exist within the school. Instead of using home groups or class groups or subschools as the basis for appointing students, existing involvement areas (where students volunteer for participation) each appoint a representative to form an SRC. Proposed student representatives for the school council are selected by a separate process (e.g. directly elected from the whole student body).

Again, the existing interest groups continue to meet, alternating with SRC meetings. Larger forums can be held to involve larger numbers directly in big decisions where necessary.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• It recognises existing action-based structures in the school, and increases student decision-making over directions of these groups. • It is more likely to lead to student action rather than talk. • Larger numbers of students can be involved in the whole structure. • It can involve a range of staff, supporting areas in which they're already involved.	• It bypasses possibilities for curriculum linkages. • It could be resource intensive to support. • It could isolate students who aren't already involved in some activity. • Groups could concentrate on their own areas (possibly competing for resources) without awareness or attention to the bigger picture. • It could focus on short-term, limited goals rather than ongoing needs.

Existing interest groups

Sport

Social Justice

Environment

Music

Curriculum

Representatives

SRC

SRC Executive
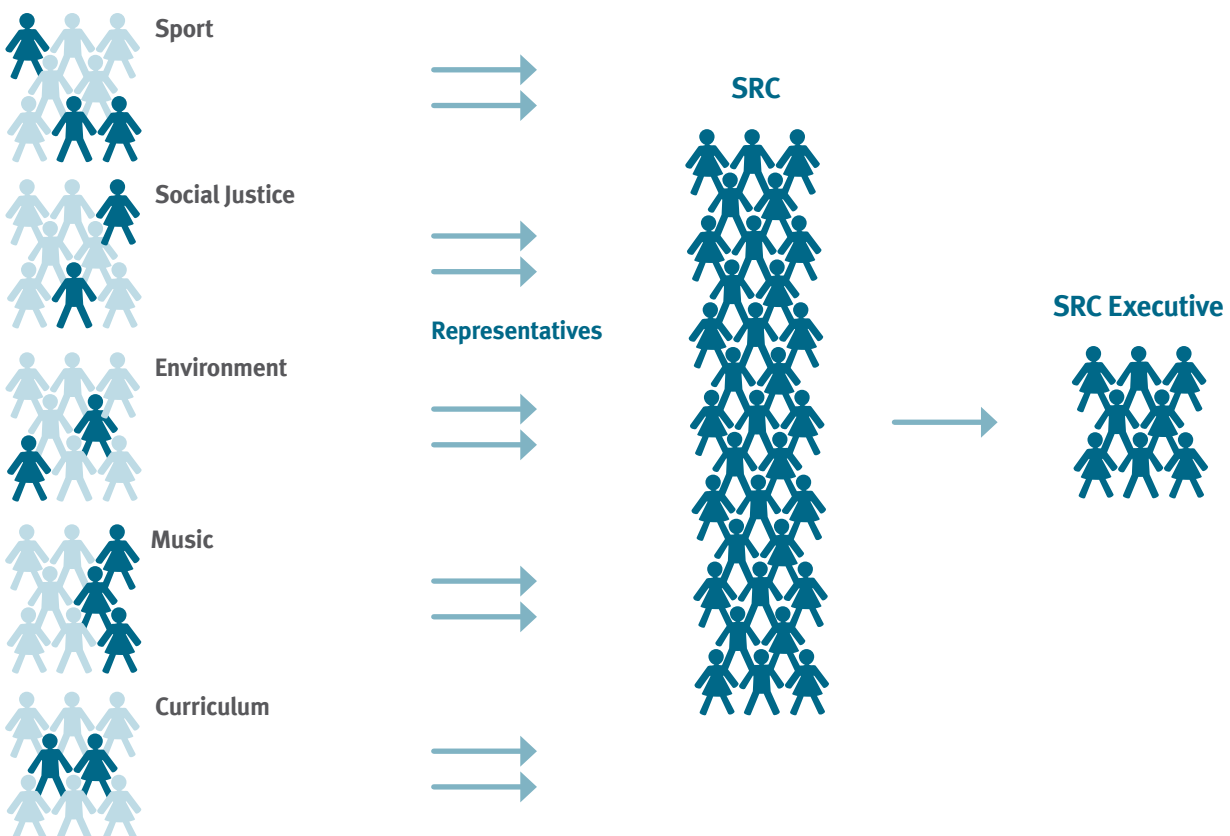
5. Multi-level model

A broader student representative structure is defined, involving an occasional student forum (e.g. once a term). This large body sets up other structures, hears reports and makes big decisions. Subschool groups and/or working groups are appointed around set tasks (short term or continuing) and meet regularly as the 'engine room' of the SRC. A formal SRC, consisting of representatives from these subgroups, meets frequently to coordinate groups and allocate work. The powers and responsibilities of each group are defined in the SRC's constitution. Proposed school council representatives can be elected separately (and coopted into this structure), appointed at the forum meetings, or drawn from the SRC.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• It can involve fairly large numbers of students.	• This structure could require a lot of staff and student time.
• It can link to existing school curriculum and other structures.	• It could result in occasional large meetings that might be difficult to run.
• It can enable students to choose their levels of involvement in activities.	• It could become a complex structure that confuses people.
• If some areas break down, other parts of the structure can continue.	

Student forum
(all students: in year levels etc)
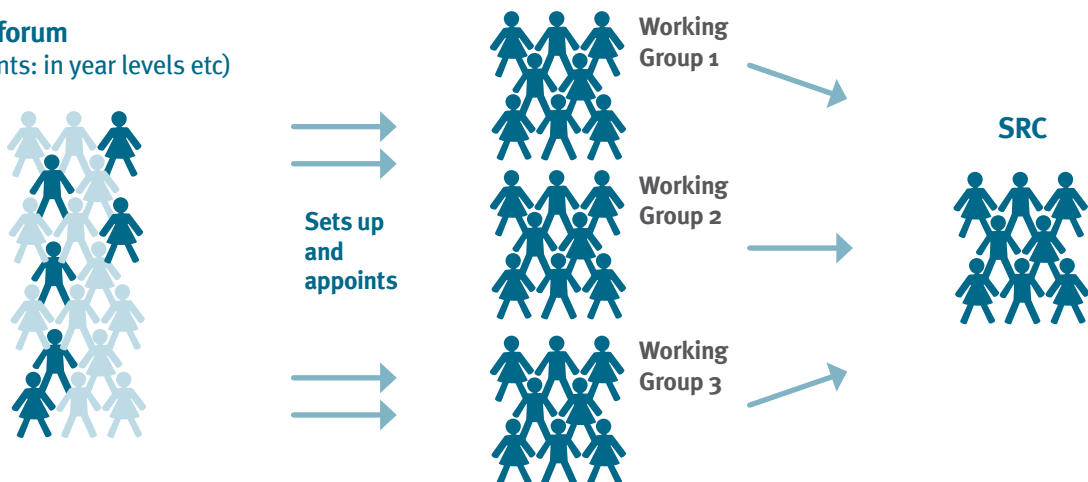
Good Practice

In a large school in a regional centre, there are separate student councils elected for each of the junior (Years 7–8), middle (Years 9–10) and senior (Years 11–12) schools. In each case, the councils are elected fairly traditionally, with two students per home group. Each fortnight the councils meet separately, each with its own support teacher. Much of the business of each council is concerned with issues relevant to that subschool.

In addition, four students are elected from within each council to form a coordinating SRC – they call it the student senate. This senate meets once a month, on a different day to the other councils. It considers anything referred to it by the three student councils or it can raise whole-school issues and refer them back to the councils.

Attention: These are just some possible ways of building an SRC. The best SRCs look at the range of options and put together a structure that suits the size, conditions and needs of their school community.

The constitution of your SRC is simply a document that describes the structure of your SRC and how it operates—so that everyone is clear about the way it works.

Why have a constitution?

SRC Constitution

This section gives you information on how to draw up your SRC constitution.

If you have a constitution, everyone can be clear about how the SRC operates. If there's a dispute about the way things have been done, you should be able to refer to the constitution for information. It's a way of being democratic and accountable.

Writing a constitution is also a way of being clear about how you want the SRC to operate. The sections of the constitution provide a structure or a checklist of things you should be thinking about.

Changing the constitution

Once you have a constitution that describes how you want the SRC to operate, it should be reasonably hard to change. If there are aspects of how you want the SRC to operate that you want to change from year to year – e.g. office bearers, or what activities you do – then don't write these into the constitution, but attach them as a description, and say something like 'as outlined from time to time in attachment A' in the actual constitution.

Make sure that the really important parts of the constitution – the purposes of the SRC, and the ways in which it's a student-controlled organisation – are very hard to change.

What should be in a constitution?

The details of the constitution will vary from school to school and will reflect the structure of the SRC that you have chosen. Nonetheless, some common items should be considered (see the following template T1: SRC constitution for an example of a constitution structure).

eg Examples of SRC constitutions are available on the VicSRC website at www.vicsrc.org.au (see Part 6).

GOOD PRACTICE { The SRC looks at the existing SRC constitution at its SRC training day. Student representatives are given a copy and become familiar with it. They consider if the constitution still describes how they want to operate and sometimes suggest and make changes to some details.

Using template T1: SRC constitution

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used by your SRC.

Use this template to help you draw up your SRC constitution. You can simply use the headings provided and add the details to describe how your SRC works, or you can add or delete headings and change the numbering to suit your SRC. The information in italics is meant to help you with suggestions and you should change the wording to say what your SRC has decided about its structure.

Make sure that you only include things in this constitution that you want to last for some time. If you have other information that will change regularly (e.g. point 6 about the role statements of the SRC officers, or point 8 about meeting procedures) simply attach these to the constitution and refer to the attachment. It is then easier to change these roles or procedures from year to year.

1.5 Who should be on an SRC?

Whether you are just starting on an SRC for the first time, or continuing with one, you need to be thinking about who should be an SRC member and how a student gets to be one.

This section puts forward issues and alternatives and you can read these now or come back to them at another time.

There are several factors to take into account in deciding who you want on the SRC and how to recruit SRC members. If you are joining a pre-existing SRC then it's probably best to stick to the current structure unless others are reporting that it's causing problems. Once you've seen how it works in practice for a year, you'll have a good basis for identifying and fixing any specific problems.

Each year you should review who has been on the SRC, how they got there, and whether the current arrangements are working well. Is the current situation and outcome what you want for your SRC? How has your recruitment or selection method influenced this? You might need to look at the alternative approaches outlined next and suggest some changes to how the SRC is formed.

Recruiting students to the SRC is an important task. Getting the right mix of skills and representation from across the student body is important in establishing an effective SRC. In this section we will consider the qualities of an ideal SRC member and then some different processes for selecting students for the SRC.

Qualities of ideal student representatives

Ideal student representatives have many wonderful qualities – so many that we couldn't possibly list them all here. So we've grouped them together into skill sets, some of which contain a mix of skills and other attributes. They are presented here in no particular order – they're all important!

Private communication

Good student representatives are capable of engaging with people at an individual level. They can talk with everyone from the class clown to the principal in a one-on-one situation. They are approachable, personable, good listeners and can hold their own in a tense negotiation.

Public communication

This is about communicating with a wide range of audiences. Ideal student representatives understand the student body as a whole and the diversity within it. They are confident public speakers who can also write newsletter articles and have enough artistic flair to design an appealing poster campaign.

Organised

Being busy people, good student representatives are naturally organised. They manage their time well so as to balance meetings and behind-the-scenes SRC work – but still get their homework done and on time. They are strong on implementing the decisions and actions of the SRC and great at organising events down to the last detail.

Passionate

Ideal SRC representatives bubble with passion and enthusiasm. Their positive spirit is infectious, both throughout the SRC and with the entire student body. They have a clear sense of purpose about what it means to represent all students and are great at motivating others to get on with the job or support SRC decisions.

Creative thinkers

Good SRC representatives don't always do and say the same old things. They can look at a problem or issue from different perspectives and make 'out of the box' suggestions for action. They are also prepared to play the devil's advocate role, raise a dissenting point of view and not just go along with the crowd.

Committed

The best SRC representatives go the distance. They don't just make a lot of noise and plans in Term 1 and then drop out when exams roll around. They follow their projects through from start to finish, including writing up an evaluation and some hand-over notes for the next SRC representative. They don't drop out when the going gets tough or give in to pressure.

Team players

Successful SRC representatives are great at working with others. They know that to succeed requires a team effort, and don't just go for personal glory. They have the patience for difficult meetings where there are different viewpoints and play a unifying role that brings the SRC to a collective decision.

Visionary

Great SRC representatives are dreamers. They are ambitious about what the SRC can achieve and see the bigger picture of how the SRC should be positioning itself in the school community. They also see the steps along the way and can map out a plan for how to get there.

Advocates

Good SRC representatives are strong advocates. They have a deep concern for representing all students and listen carefully to all concerns. The best SRC representatives are willing to represent all points of view, regardless of their personal convictions.

Never known a student representative like this?

Wondering how you're supposed to live up to these expectations?

Don't worry: the ideal student representative is a myth because it's almost impossible for one student to have all these skills and attributes. That's why SRCs are made up of diverse groups of students, so that each individual representative doesn't need to have all these skills covered. Nonetheless, each representative should identify the two or three skill sets they are strong in – and maybe one or two they would like to improve on by learning from others in the team. If you have one or more of these qualities, you will be a valuable member of your SRC. For the SRC to be effective as a group, it's important for all members to have at least some of the skills listed so that you have all the skill sets covered within the group.
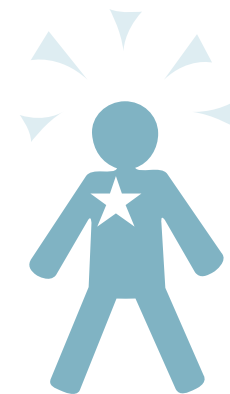
eg GOOD PRACTICE { The school decides on the skills that SRC members need and then plans to teach these skills in areas such as English (communication) and commerce (finances). There are many opportunities in the school for students to develop confidence in public speaking and organising events.

Process for selecting students for the SRC

Having defined who you want on the SRC – the range of students who will cover all these skill sets – how do you make sure you recruit the right students? This section outlines four methods for selecting students and provides some advice for choosing the right method for your school.

Figure 1.1:
Methods for selecting students for the SRC
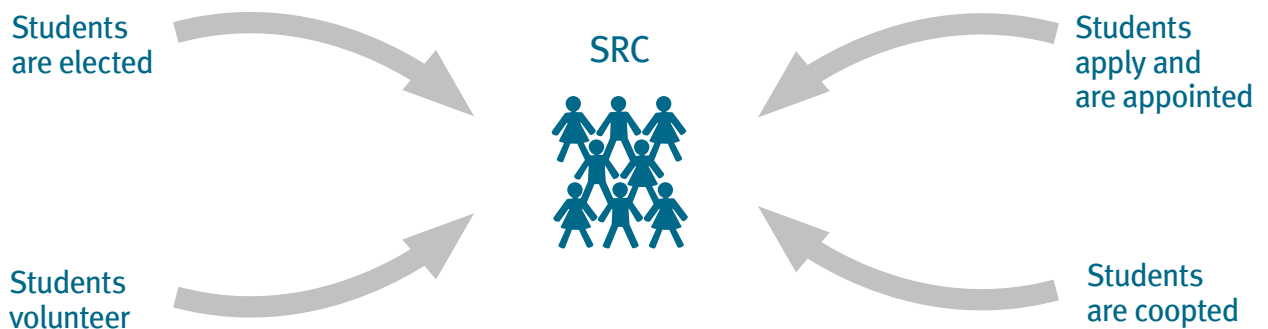
ATTENTION: The method used for selecting students should be specified in the SRC's constitution, so that everyone is clear as to how these processes take place.

Election

In this method students nominate or are nominated. They present the reasons why they should be elected (through speeches or in writing) and an election is then held by the appropriate body (class or year level, etc.) with students voting publicly (hands up) or privately (ballot papers).

Usually a fixed quota of students is to be elected from a group and this is specified in the SRC's constitution.

Advantages	Disadvantages	Favours these skill sets
• It's democratic and makes students directly accountable to their peers. • It can ensure all classes and/or year levels are represented. • It requires all students to participate in shaping the SRC. • It can be linked to learning about parliamentary processes.	• It can easily become a popularity vote. • Some groups might have several students interested, some of whom miss out. • Forming reasonably sized elected groups can result in a large SRC.	• Public communication • Passionate • Visionary • Advocates

Application and appointment

Students apply for positions on the SRC, usually in writing, and give reasons. A selection panel is then set up (e.g. teachers, past SRC members, administration, outside 'friend', etc.) and applicants are interviewed (as for a job), and the panel appoints students to the SRC.

Advantages	Disadvantages	Favours these skill sets
• It can focus commitment. • It can make sure applications are examined carefully. • It can specify criteria.	• It could mean that those already involved select their mates. • It could move control away from students. • It could ignore the benefits of 'non-conventional' students.	• Private communication • Committed • Organised • Passionate • Advocates

Volunteers

The SRC is advertised and interested students turn up. A commitment can be asked for (e.g. students have to turn up for the whole year) or membership can vary from meeting to meeting.

Advantages	Disadvantages	Favours these skill sets
• It makes maximum use of interested students. • It is likely to get a group that understands the function of the SRC. • This is usually a more manageable group. • It requires minimal organisation of selection process.	• It can be dominated by an in-group or a group with a specific agenda. • It doesn't ensure that all ages or groups are represented. • It can result in students dropping out if enthusiasm falls.	• Visionary • Passionate • Organised

Cooption

Students with specific skills or interests are identified by past SRC members, teachers or the current SRC; they are invited and/or persuaded to join the SRC, either long term or short term (and either with or without a formal vote).

Advantages	Disadvantages	Favours these skill sets
• It encourages talented individuals to use their skills in different ways. • It is flexible and can deal with short-term appointments and commitments. • It broadens the appeal and profile of the SRC.	• It can mean only a small group of mates get invited. • Students might be persuaded to serve unwillingly. • Coopted members can have a reduced sense of their accountability to the student body.	• It can be used to recruit anyone with a particular skill set.

Choosing your model

Think about the model that is used in your school. Is it similar to one of these or a combination of two or more models? What is the outcome? Who do you get on your SRC? Does your SRC have a good mix of skills, or is it strong on some but weak on others?

If you don't have an existing system, think about the culture of your student body. Is there respect for the organised and committed but quiet high achievers, or do students look up to their strong and passionate peers who lead from the front? Will you need to encourage commitment and a sense of service or promote more 'out of the box' thinking?

Think about the skill sets favoured by each model and work out what elements you need to include in order to recruit students with a wide range of skills. Many schools use a combination of these approaches. For instance, a process could be as follows:

- criteria are made public
- students must apply
- an election is held
- in addition, other interested students can be coopted to the SRC, or volunteer for its working groups.

So you can 'mix and match' to design a system that reflects your students and your school. Note that the skill sets of 'team player' and 'creative thinking' are particularly favoured by any of the above methods. Maybe you can design a new element to help encourage students with these skills.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

In the past, the SRC had been dominated by popular students, who were not often the best suited to be representatives. Some were so obsessed with being popular that they never did any work, hardly ever turned up to meetings, and never argued with their friends. Some classes had to 'sack' their representative, and appoint someone else who would turn up to meetings!

In reconsidering how it elected students to the SRC from home groups (for this was the way it was decided to form the SRC), the school decided to make the election of the representatives part of their Civics and Citizenship Education program.

This started with all classes discussing what representatives in our society do. Examples were given of parliamentary representatives, representatives at work, sporting team representatives, etc. Classes then brainstormed what sort of qualities these representatives needed to show – when our society looks for a good representative, what are they looking for?

It was only at this point that the idea of home group representatives was introduced. Some groups made posters for their classrooms describing their good representatives; others made 'job wanted' posters. Students then nominated for class representatives – and had to say how they met these criteria.

Classes were careful to work out ways that students could nominate without necessarily needing qualities that weren't specified, e.g. having good spelling or being able to make a speech.

When it came to voting, it still wasn't perfect, but many more students were elected who had thought about why they wanted to be a representative, and many more classes were satisfied that they had elected someone who would do the job.

We have good structures and processes in place. This hasn't happened overnight but has taken time and effort. Being on the SRC is no longer just a popularity contest – students are elected because their peers think they will do a good job. The SRC has a high status in the school; it's valued and students are motivated and keen to get involved.
Secondary College SRC

Students get to be on the SRC by coming along to meetings. SRC meetings are open to any student. There was a concern that voting for SRC representatives would just be a popularity contest, but we're now recognising that we need to investigate a more formal approach to SRC membership. This must be balanced with an understanding of the school culture and what works within this school.
Secondary College SRC

Each year level conducted their own system as to who was elected to represent them. Each application process was suitable to the capabilities of the students. Applications were due in writing to respective teachers by a certain date. These applicants were then given the opportunity to address their year level with a speech that would support and confirm the information stated in their written application. Students from all year levels were asked to undertake a secret vote for who they thought would best represent their year level.
P–9 College SRC

Representing your diverse student population

Every school has a broad range of students. They have different backgrounds, abilities, needs and interests. Not all students are interested in the sorts of activities that SRCs do – which may involve sitting down, talking about issues, organising activities and negotiating changes.

There are many ways in which all students in the school can participate in important decisions and actions about their education – and the way that the school operates. Some examples are:

1. In student action teams – investigating and acting on things that interest them
2. As technology assistants (e.g. maintaining a school website)
3. As peer tutors, peer supporters, peer mentors, peer mediators – assisting other students
4. As sports captains or coaches
5. In producing student publications (e.g. a student newspaper, radio station or video journal)
6. In performing arts or debating
7. As environmental or sustainability leaders.

These different examples provide possibilities for the active participation of a wider range of students with different interests and skills.

> *Students need to feel that what they are learning is important. They want the opportunity to express the concerns they have about their world and their future ... In planning for student participation, each school community needs to ensure that its practice is inclusive of the unique and special characteristics of its student population. Strategies enabling students to learn and apply decision-making and leadership skills will take into account each student's age, gender, social and cultural background, capabilities, challenge or disability.*
> **DEECD Guidelines for Student Participation Policy (Office for Government School Education, January 2008)**

The SRC is one possibility for the active participation of students within the school and the community. However, it's important that an effective SRC is strongly linked with all of the above initiatives and that it can act as a coordinating and representative voice for all students – about all their different interests and needs.

This means that the SRC should always be trying to be as representative of the whole student population as possible. This doesn't mean that there must be a student from all the different groups in the school on the SRC, but the SRC should be known and recognised by all students as being their representatives. Here are some questions to ask of your SRC:

Age
- Does the SRC have representatives from all age groups within the school?
- Do younger and older students have the same importance to the SRC – are all voices heard?
- Are they treated with the same respect by the SRC?
- Do the SRC structures allow for issues relevant to different age groups to be dealt with?

Gender
- Are male and female students (in a coeducational school) represented on the SRC?
- What roles do they have? Are their voices heard equally? Are they treated with the same respect?
- Are same sex attracted students represented on or by the SRC? How are these issues raised and discussed?

Culture, ethnicity and social background
- Do all cultural groups within the school have access to the SRC? Are they represented on or by the SRC?
- Are issues relevant to all groups of students considered seriously?

Engagement
- Does the SRC include a broad range of students or just 'high flying' ones?
- How does the SRC relate to students who are disengaged from the school – or cynical about the SRC?
- What barriers are there for students who are struggling with learning, or having difficulties at school, to be involved with the SRC or other initiatives?

Disability
- Is there representation on your SRC of young people with disabilities?
- Are activities run by your SRC accessible to students with disabilities (e.g. is everyone able to access the SRC website, events and promotional materials)?
- Are issues and concerns for young people with disabilities brought forward to your SRC?

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

There have been several examples of students setting up separate SRC structures to support, encourage, engage and empower students from under-represented groups within the school community – as a step towards increasing their confidence to take part in whole-school student structures. For example, one school, noting that no Koorie students had ever nominated for the SRC, supported Koorie students to set up their own Koorie SRC. In another school, students in the Intensive English Language Centre felt excluded from SRC discussions by their lack of English. So they set up a Language Centre SRC. In both cases, these SRCs worked both to deal with issues relevant to those students, and also to provide the skills and confidence needed for students to work as part of the whole school's SRC.

What might block the participation of students in or with the SRC?

Watch out for these traps:

1. The SRC that is not reflective of the school's diversity.
2. The SRC that has just one way of working (e.g. that just spends time talking).
3. The assumption (e.g. in selection) that students must already be highly confident to want to be on the SRC.
4. The SRC has a negative or restricted image e.g. that it is ineffective, irrelevant, nerdy, etc.
5. The SRC that puts practical barriers in the way of participation: when it meets, what it costs, etc.
6. The SRC that is associated with one or two strong friendship groups within the school.

How do you become more representative?

1. Take the issue seriously and be willing to question your SRC practices.
2. Review your current situation: who is and isn't represented? This could be both in the SRC membership and also in the issues and approaches that the SRC adopts.
3. Discuss what causes this: What is it about the SRC's structure or operation that might block participation by some individuals or groups?
4. Consider alternatives: How could the SRC's structure or operation assist participation by a wider range of individuals and groups?
5. Decide: What changes are needed?
6. Think more broadly: What other approaches can be developed, in association with the SRC, to support the participation of other students in different ways?

Remember that the SRC doesn't have to do everything. In fact, expecting the SRC to be the only group that acts might take power away from some individuals or groups of students. Instead, the SRC can work out ways to support other individuals and groups to take their own initiatives, to speak for themselves, or to form their own action teams or working groups about issues they are passionate about.

1.6 Selecting an SRC support teacher

Many schools spend a lot of time selecting 'the right students' to the SRC but don't give much thought to selecting 'the right teacher(s)'. In reality, the role of the SRC support teacher or teachers is crucial to the SRC's success. This section provides some ideas about what an SRC support teacher does, what qualities they should have, and some possibilities for how they might be selected.

How many teachers does it take?

As with selecting students, the first question is: how many teachers are required? The conventional response from schools has been to appoint only one teacher but, as SRCs grow in importance and size, more and more schools are appointing teams of two or more teachers to what are complex and important roles. Having two or more SRC teachers has the following advantages:

- they can be responsible for different groups of students within the school's structure

- they are able to share the workload, particularly at peak times

- they can build better relationships with the many students, teachers and other people they need to interact with

- they don't feel so isolated and have someone to confer with if student–teacher relationships become strained

- an experienced SRC support teacher can induct a new teacher into the role

- the impact of the SRC is spread across staff members.

Of course, it's important to have teachers who can work and communicate together well, as SRC support teachers often play important linking roles between staff.

What does an SRC support teacher do?

In fact, SRC support teachers play important linking roles between all parts of the school: students, staff and the principal.

Successful SRCs have suggested that the SRC support teacher works in three broad areas:

1. Assists the SRC through providing:
   - information, particularly around school rules and procedures
   - advice on the SRC's proposed initiatives
   - contacts within the school (with staff, principal, committees, etc.) and outside the school (with local government, programs, etc.)
   - help to the SRC when it's in trouble.

2. Proposes directions to the SRC: makes suggestions and puts forward ideas — particularly around how to do things — but supports the SRC's decision making; i.e. knows when to 'back off'.

3. Challenges the SRC: proposes counter-arguments so that the SRC has to think about possible objections and problems and gets the SRC to think through implications of its proposals and actions.
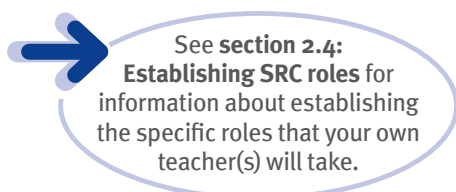
Qualities of a valued SRC support teacher

Students on SRCs value the SRC support teacher being a person who is:

- **Trusted:** has the respect of the SRC and is friendly
- **Respectful:** of all students, both within the SRC and in the broader student body; listens; and is open to all students
- **Democratic:** is ready to suggest ideas, but knows when to step back; and is willing to respect SRC decisions even if he/she doesn't agree with them
- **Prepared:** has the time to support the SRC; brings information and resources to the SRC; looks forward and has 'the bigger picture' and the skills to embed student voice as part of the school culture
- **Supportive:** understands the importance of student voice; and recognises the links between student participation in real decision-making and school improvement
- **Enthusiastic:** is committed to the work and role of the SRC within the school; and has the capacity to encourage change and sustainability
- **Authoritative:** has the authority within the school community to speak and be heard in support of the SRC
- **Responsible:** follows through on commitments.

eg GOOD PRACTICE

Students on one SRC say that they value their SRC support teacher because he listens to the ideas and opinions of SRC members and encourages other staff to also consider and support students' views. But this doesn't mean that he's not critical. One of his most valuable characteristics is that he challenges SRC members to back up their views with evidence and arguments. He provides important information on the school structures, suggests ways of going about things that are likely to succeed, and draws attention to the need for proper procedures.

But finally, they say, he strongly argues that the SRC must be run by the students – so he is careful to 'back off' when required, and trusts the students to lead.

In this section there is a sample 'Wanted' poster (see Figure 1.3).
Like a job advertisement, it outlines the tasks to be performed, and the characteristics of the support teacher that are desired.

Training exercise: Develop your own SRC support teacher 'Wanted' poster
Think about, discuss and decide on what you (the SRC) want your support teacher to do, and what sort of qualities you think your support teacher should have. Even if you have a limited role in selecting your support teacher, this is a useful process for you to think about the relationship you want to have between your SRC and your support teacher.

eg GOOD PRACTICE

The SRC support teacher has a time allowance and/or a financial allowance for the role. Support time is built into their teaching allotment.

The support teacher selection process

How is the support teacher appointed?

Any of the models suggested for recruiting students to the SRC could be used for selecting the support teacher. For example, applications or nominations could be sought, and then candidates interviewed; appointments could be voted upon by staff and/or students; the SRC could nominate a favoured candidate for cooption; perhaps only a limited number of staff have time to take on support for the SRC.

The principal is responsible for the allocation of staff roles within the school and is also responsible to the school for the decisions made. But there are several ways that the SRC can be involved in the process. The following flowchart (Figure 1.2) shows some possible selection pathways, while Figure 1.3 gives you a sample 'Wanted' poster advertising for an SRC support teacher.

Figure 1.2:
Options for selection of support teacher(s)

Applications are sought from all interested staff	Principal interviews and nominates candidate/s to the SRC	SRC accepts or rejects the nomination/s	
Applications are sought from all interested staff	SRC interviews and nominates candidate/s to principal	Principal confirms or rejects the nominee/s	
Applications are sought from all interested staff	Combined panel of principal, SRC and former SRC teacher interviews and selects preferred person/s		
SRC discusses preferred person/s	SRC approaches preferred person/s	Applicant accepts nomination	Principal confirms or rejects the nominee/s
Principal consults with staff	Principal nominates one or more staff who have time in their allotment	SRC accepts or rejects nominations or chooses between nominees	

WANTED

SRC Support Teacher

Always wondered if there was anything more you could do to help build a stronger student body? There is!

By becoming an SRC support teacher you can become a mentor to this essential school body by guiding it along a sturdy and prosperous path. Your duties will entail being an important link between all parts of the school: students, staff and the Principal.

You will **assist the SRC** with useful information (school procedures and rules), advise on proposed initiatives, and liaise with the principal and school committees.

Another crucial role involves **proposing ideas to the SRC**; this allows for 'unthinkable' ideas to be become 'thinkable', stimulated by your suggestions and alternatives.

If you wish to embark on the wondrous journey of becoming an SRC support teacher, your third role would be to **challenge the SRC**. Proposing counter-arguments allows for the SRC to consider potential rebuffs and positive objections to SRC initiatives.

DOES THIS APPEAL TO YOU?

Are you...

TRUSTWORTHY? Open-minded?
ENTHUSIASTIC? Reliable?
Knowledgeable?

Ready for a challenge?

If you ticked these points, then you are a prime candidate to become the SRC Support Teacher for our school.

Go on, it will be the time of your life!

1.7 An effective SRC

After spending time working out why you need an SRC, what sorts of things it can do, what structure you will have and which students and support teachers you want, how do you know if your SRC is effective?

This section can be used to start that process, by providing a checklist of the different things that can make an SRC effective or ineffective. It asks you to say how true each one is, then give each area a priority for action – and suggest what action can be taken.

SRCs have developed some criteria for an effective SRC. An article in *Connect Magazine* (see the original article at www.vicsrc.org.au) suggested a vision of what an effective SRC can and should do in 10 possible areas. The article shows how you could use these criteria to collect different views (experienced students, younger students, teachers, uninvolved students, the principal, etc.) to start a discussion about the state of your SRC. The importance of the answers you get is more to do with how they help you to improve your SRC. These views give a glimpse at one point in time, but this might (and probably should) change with time, especially if you use what you learn to help you improve.

You might use this audit tool at various times; some criteria relate to later sections of this kit, and you may find information in these to help you decide on the action you will take.

Key: **A:** Always   **F:** Frequently   **O:** Occasionally   **S:** Seldom   **N:** Never

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action high/medium/low	Action to be taken
Criterion 1: The SRC meets regularly							
The SRC has a clear timetable for meeting.							
The SRC notifies all members (and other students) when the next meeting is to be held.							
There is good attendance of SRC members.							
The SRC meets in various forms and groups (e.g. as a whole council, in subgroups, etc.).							

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action high/medium/low	Action to be taken

Criterion 2: The SRC has clear structures and processes

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action	Action to be taken
There is a clear and known process for a student to become a member of the SRC through election or appointment.							
There is a known and written constitution describing how the SRC works.							
This constitution and how the SRC is working are reviewed regularly.							
The SRC has internal structures and processes that are appropriate to its work (including chairing, recording decisions, etc.).							
SRC meetings are well run, effective (productive) and enjoyable.							

Criterion 3: The SRC is broadly representative of students

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action	Action to be taken
Students are elected or appointed through democratic and representative processes (by election, or from volunteers, or by other agreed processes).							
There is a range of students on the SRC – in age, ability, school engagement, ethnicity, gender, etc. – who broadly represent students in the school.							
No significant group of students is, or feels, overrepresented on or by the SRC.							
Being on the SRC is a desirable outcome for a broad range of students.							

Key: **A:** Always **F:** Frequently **O**: Occasionally **S**: Seldom **N**: Never

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action high/medium/low	Action to be taken

Criterion 4: The SRC reports to students and gets advice from students

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action	Action to be taken
SRC representatives get advice and support from other students in different ways.							
Time is available for SRC members to report back to other students and to get advice.							
The views of other students are considered and taken seriously by the SRC.							

Criterion 5: The SRC deals with a range of issues

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action	Action to be taken
The SRC is aware of the different things that an SRC can do.							
The SRC actually does a range of things, including advocacy for students, putting forward student views (e.g. on curriculum, rules, uniforms, facilities, etc.), organising events, supporting agreed causes – i.e. it's not just restricted to fundraising or social activities.							
The SRC controls the time that it allocates to different issues and topics – it makes sure that one or two things don't dominate.							
The SRC sets up appropriate internal structures to deal with different issues, e.g. subgroups or working parties.							
The SRC is effective in implementing and working on a range of issues.							
The SRC completes its plans and achieves what it sets out to do.							

Key: **A:** Always **F:** Frequently **O:** Occasionally **S:** Seldom **N:** Never

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action high/medium/low	Action to be taken
Criterion 6: The SRC is trained and networked to be effective							
Appropriate training events are organised within the school and made available to all members of the SRC.							
Members of the SRC get follow-up support and informal training in the skills needed to do their work.							
The SRC has access to interschool and statewide networking opportunities.							
The SRC is a member of the VicSRC.							
Criterion 7: The SRC has time to do its work and gets credit for its work							
The SRC meets at a time convenient to all members.							
Time is provided, as part of the school curriculum, for SRC members to do their work.							
Credit is provided for SRC members in order to recognise their contribution to the school and to their own learning.							
The SRC is publicly acknowledged for its work.							
Criterion 8: The SRC is connected to the school's decision-making							
Students are represented on the school's decision-making body, either from the SRC, or directly from the student body.							
Students are represented on a range of other committees within the school (e.g. uniform committee, canteen committee, curriculum committee, facilities, etc.).							
Student views are heard and considered seriously in all these forums.							
The SRC is asked for its views on all important matters.							

Key: **A:** Always   **F:** Frequently   **O**: Occasionally   **S**: Seldom   **N**: Never

Indicator	A	F	O	S	N	Priority for action high/medium/low	Action to be taken
Criterion 9: The SRC has teacher and principal support							
There is an SRC support teacher who has time-release to support the SRC.							
This teacher supports and advises the SRC without taking over.							
There are regular meetings of the SRC with the principal and other appropriate members of the school administration.							
The views and suggestions of the SRC are seriously considered and discussed.							
Criterion 10: The SRC has the resources it needs							
The SRC has a budget that it controls and allocates.							
The SRC has access to practical resources, such as photocopying, mailing, etc.							
The SRC has an SRC notice board that it controls.							
The SRC has a space of its own – e.g. an office, a filing cabinet, etc.							

2.1 Building an SRC team

Just being elected by a vote of students or selected at an interview does not make student representatives into a group that operates well together. This section provides some ideas about ways that you can build your representatives into an SRC team.

At the start of the year everyone is fresh and full of energy! Well, we hope so; if they're not then these activities should help. But it's amazing how quickly enthusiasm can run down after a couple of meetings if the group hasn't properly bonded. If you give some time and energy to team-building at the start of the year, you'll notice the benefits throughout the year.

Reflect on what you've seen in past SRCs. Did everyone pull their weight? Or was most of the work done by just a few students? Did you find that you argued over who had the right to make decisions? Use SRC time at the start of the year to get to know each other and to agree how to work together. This will help everyone participate as a team. If you already know how to do this, you can help the new members settle in – more experienced SRC students can be allocated to new SRC representatives as 'mentors' to provide guidance. Or you can just sit back and enjoy the fun of SRC training activities!

Good Practice

Your school may have a lot of younger students who are participating in the SRC for the first time. To make sure that they settle in well and feel comfortable in their new role, it's helpful to provide them with a mentor (a more experienced SRC student who they can speak to if they have any questions about the SRC). Or you could hold a training day specifically for new and/or junior students on your SRC.

Further information about mentoring younger students is available in the **'R3: Ten Big Ideas'** resource online at **www.vicsrc.org.au (see Part 6)**.

Team-building purposes

Once all the SRC representatives have been selected, it's important to begin by allocating time and training for the group to learn to work together. The ideal way to do this is by holding an SRC training day or camp. This will enable your SRC to get away from the school environment and take some time to:

- get to know each other
- decide on how you want to work together
- set some key goals for the year (see the following section)
- develop a sense of group identity.

A strong group identity will help your SRC to achieve its most ambitious objectives and enable it to overcome any group or individual challenges you might face along the way.

Each year, the new SRC has a training day. The group tries to get out of the school and uses the local youth centre. The day is organised by some SRC students from last year, the support teacher and the school's student wellbeing coordinator. They also ask a local youth worker to help facilitate the day. The school supports the day by providing time, lunch and hire of the facilities, and the principal attends the first session to tell the SRC how important it is to the school.

A group of the new SRC members meets before the day to talk about the program and to say what skills they need to learn.

Even if you can't organise a training day or camp, there are some important and simple things you can do in your first meeting that will help the group to start off on the right track.
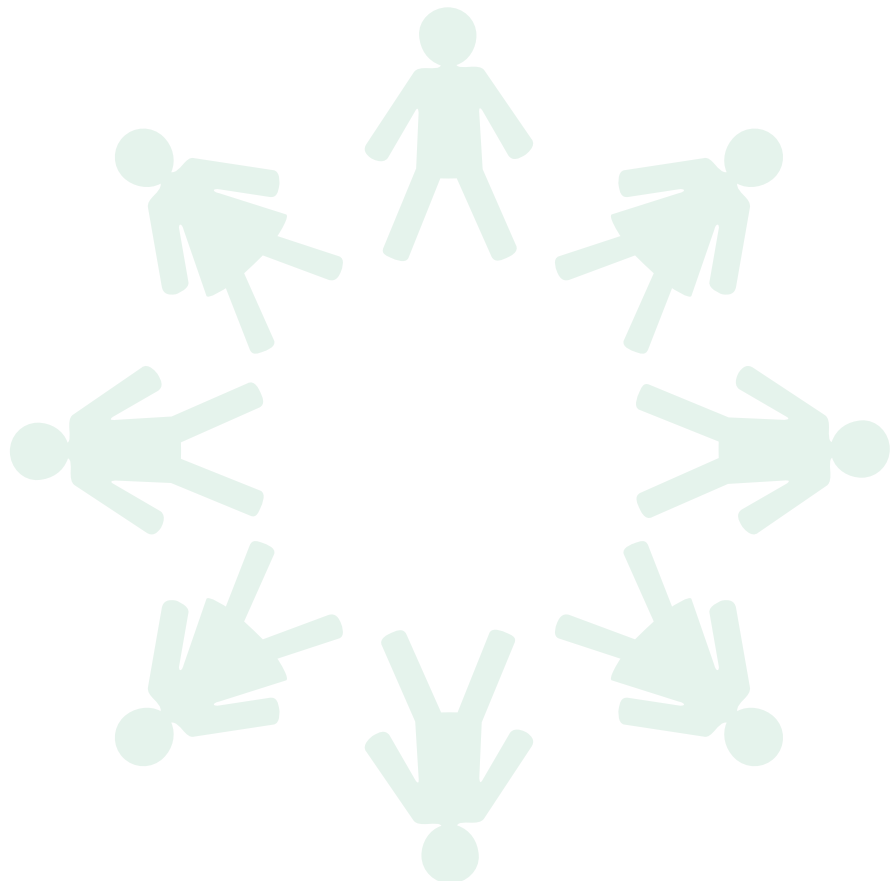
Getting to know you

The obvious thing to do first is to make sure everyone knows everyone else's name. Go around the group and get everyone to say their name and something about themselves. It might be something wacky, a reason they joined the SRC, or a particular skill they bring. Anything simple and non-threatening that all can share and that tells something about themselves will help the group to begin working together. Follow this with a quick game to start things off on a fun note. Even a two-minute game of knots played in small mixed groups can help to create a great feeling, or a five-minute game of bomb squad can raise the energy of the group. (These exercises are explained below.)

Team-building activities

Lead a discussion on what teamwork is and why it's important. You can introduce this before you start the exercises – but it's important to talk about what was learnt after the exercises to gain the maximum benefit from reflecting on them. Run one or more of the suggested exercises (or invent one of your own). After each, get the participants to say what they understand from the exercise about teamwork.

Activity: Teamwork exercises

Choose from these teamwork exercises or make up your own.

Exercise 1: Knots

Smaller groups (an 8–12 person team is best) stand in a circle, facing inwards. Each person puts one hand into the circle and grasps another hand: one hand to one hand. Then each person puts their other hand in and grasps another hand. The group must then untangle themselves (the knot) into a circle. If this is done easily, a variation is to challenge a group to untangle themselves without talking. At the end, discuss how the group solved the untangling, and what strategies were or could have been adopted.

Exercise 2: Counting to 10

This is a very simple exercise to encourage listening to each other, non-verbal communication and cooperation. The students sit in a circle. Tell them that they have to count to ten in order. Anyone can start; anyone can follow. If two people say a number at the same time, the group has to start again. At the end, discuss what strategies were used.

Variation: When you manage to get to 10, the group can then count backwards.

Exercise 3: Bomb squad

NB: Prevent students from doing anything unsafe.

Show the students a circular area on the floor at least three metres across. Use chairs or something to define the borders. This is the danger zone! Inside the circle is electrified (or make up whatever story you like: the point is they cannot enter the circle and nothing they use can touch the floor inside the circle).

Place an object in the centre of the circle, such as a can or a soft toy. Explain to the students that this item contains a bomb that must be defused by them, the bomb squad. In order to get to the bomb they must get it out of the circle. However, if the bomb tips over it will explode. They can use any materials they can find in the room that you approve of for them to use (safely).

Exercise 4: Lunar landing

Give the students the following list of items they find in the wreckage of their crashed spaceship on the moon (they are already wearing environmental protection suits):

- compass
- food
- knife
- oxygen
- radio transmitter
- rope
- tent
- weapons
- water
- space blanket

In teams, the students must rank the items according to the priority they place on each. The whole team must agree on the final order. During the discussion that follows the activity, remember to focus on how they came to agreement and worked as a team and not on why they chose the order they did.

(There is a definite answer to this exercise. The solution is given on page 57.)

Group agreements

It is important that any new group agrees on how it wants to work together. This includes agreeing on:

- basic principles: how people should behave with each other
- decision-making process: how people should behave in meetings
- practical details: when, where and how often the SRC will meet.

**Section 3.5:
Effective meetings** explains
the decisions needed on
meeting practices.
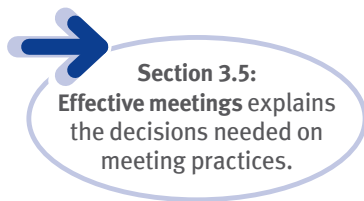
Agreement: basic principles

This is about establishing an agreed code of behaviour for how SRC members operate together, both within meetings and at other events. This is particularly important for SRCs as it can be the first time students have participated in this sort of group. Everyone (particularly new and younger students) should understand the process and feel safe in SRC meetings.

It is best for the group to come up with its own ideas and group agreements using a simple brainstorming exercise. Simply call for ideas and record them on a piece of butcher's paper or a whiteboard. Hold off on objections and discussion until you think you've collected all the ideas. Then allow students to raise concerns and refine the ideas as needed. Make sure you have everybody's agreement before finalising them, so that everybody can be held to the agreements later if needed.

A sample group agreement:

We will:

- be on time
- take a positive and friendly attitude
- do what we say we will do
- encourage others to join in
- prepare well and take pride in what we do
- help students find their own solutions
- respect differences between students

We won't:

- put other students down
- tell personal stories

You can adapt
and use **template T2:
Group agreement** for your
SRC (see Part 5).

Agreement: SRC support teacher(s)

Within its agreements, the SRC should discuss the role of the SRC support teacher(s). There can be lots of different expectations about what an SRC support teacher should and shouldn't do. These might change each year as student members become more confident and are able to take on more responsibilities. If students and teachers are not used to students negotiating the roles of teachers, this can be a sensitive process.

Start by hearing ideas from all the students about what support they would like from the teacher. As much as possible, these should be expressed in the positive: 'The SRC support teacher will …'.

When students have put their ideas forward, it's also important to hear from the SRC support teacher with any other ideas or concerns. The support teacher must be willing and able to carry out the roles that are being discussed. Make sure everybody understands what is being agreed on, but remember that if something doesn't work you can review the agreements later.

There is more information on the role of the SRC support teacher in **section 2.4: Establishing SRC roles.**
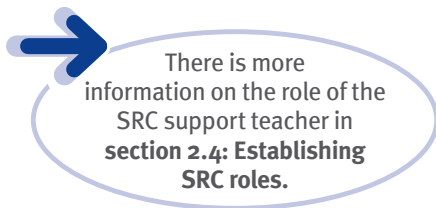
Once you've finalised all the agreements, have someone take them away and write them up clearly so that you can put them on the wall at all SRC meetings as a reminder. You might spend some time working out your agreements in detail, or a draft might be agreed quickly and revised later in the year.

eg GOOD PRACTICE

After some clashes in an SRC meeting that left a couple of students very upset, the SRC decided that it needed to set up some rules about how they would work together. They put aside one session to talk about this and try to reach agreement.

Assisted by the school's student wellbeing coordinator, they discussed how they would like to be treated in meetings. Some students remembered 'circle time' in primary school, in which there were three main rules: 'No put-downs', 'One person speaks at a time' and 'Anyone can pass'. They decided they liked these, but also wanted to add that people in the SRC 'respect the differences between people', 'always speak positively' and 'will do what we say we'll do'. Everyone agreed that these were the important points to help work together and make better decisions.

Agreement: Decision-making process

You need to agree on how decisions will be made in the group. Traditionally, most groups use a simple majority vote – which is fairly straightforward, but has the potential to divide people. The alternative that is becoming more popular is consensus decision-making – where you try to find an outcome that everyone can agree to or at least live with. This can result in better decisions being made because all points of view are included in the decision and then everyone can unite in trying to achieve the desired outcome.

For a full explanation of these two methods see **section 3.5: Effective meetings**.
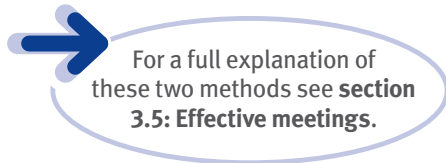
You might also want to consider what kind of decisions can be made by individuals or by groups outside formal SRC meetings. For example, can the publicity team publish newsletter articles without approval? Can the SRC president make up a policy without consulting others? Can the SRC treasurer spend small amounts of money without approval in emergencies? There are many situations that might arise and you can't cover them all, but it's useful to discuss these issues in general so that there is a common understanding of how to proceed.

Using template T2: Group agreement

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to help you draw up your group agreement. Start by getting every member of the SRC to write down some personal commitment: for example, what happens if they're unable to complete something or continue on the SRC; what they think positive group behaviours should be; and things they think the SRC members should and shouldn't do.

Then compare these and draw up a list of all the suggested points. You can discuss these and make a decision about which ones you want in your group agreement. There are five headings suggested to help you decide on what should be in this agreement, but you might want to make up some other headings of your own.

Answer to Exercise 4: Lunar landing

NASA lists these items in the following order of priority:

1. oxygen
2. tent
3. radio transmitter
4. space blanket
5. water
6. rope
7. knife
8. food
9. weapons
10. compass

The ranking is based on the most immediate threats or needs. You can last up to three minutes without oxygen, but you can last three to four days without water and two to three weeks without food. Oh … and a compass wouldn't work on the moon.

2.2 Finding common SRC purposes

The main purpose of the SRC is to represent the interests of students. However, this can mean many different things. There are often more ideas suggested than you can take on in a single year. It's important that, early in the life of your SRC, you decide as a group what it is you want to achieve during your term of office (for the purposes of this kit we'll assume that's a school year).

This section will help you to develop a plan for the year to achieve your key ambitions. It will also suggest a way of checking that you're not limiting yourselves to a few activities.

Basic principles

Think broadly: Don't let your SRC get stuck in a rut, doing the same things every year, or being restricted by someone's view that 'the SRC only works on this ...'

Include everyone: Make sure all SRC members get to have a say; getting ideas from other students, from teachers and the principal can be useful too.

Generate enthusiasm: What you agree to work on needs to be something that fires everybody up; you will need everyone working together to make your SRC a success.

Take long enough but not too long: Take time to consider all the options and, where possible, seek feedback from other students. However, don't spend all your time deciding what to do – you want to keep some energy for doing things!

It is too easy for an SRC to just go from meeting to meeting, discussing whatever is topical in that week. Make some decisions about what your SRC wants to achieve in the year ahead; this will give you a clear sense of purpose. This is also important in cementing the SRC as a team with a common goal and identity.

You might have a clear concept of what you want the SRC to achieve this year, but does this match with everyone else's ideas? You might also need to help new students and staff understand the context that the SRC works in: what support it has, what is achievable, and what you did last year. Put forward your ideas but also be open to new ones. If you want the SRC to unite behind a common cause then everyone needs to feel involved in the process and have their say.

And perhaps, with a well-established SRC, it's now time to review what you've worked on in the past and challenge yourselves to consider a broader range of possibilities.

Brainstorming ideas

Start by brainstorming ideas about what the SRC could achieve. Think as broadly as possible. Don't be limited to things that are small and achievable, because now is the time to dream up big crazy schemes. You can worry about what is achievable later when you sort them out. For inspiration, you might like to consider the following:

Election proposals

If members had to stand for election or apply in writing, what promises or ideas did they commit to doing? Now is the time to put these on the SRC's agenda for the year.

Opportunities this year

Are there any major projects or changes being planned in the school this year? There might be a review of the Year 9 curriculum, or a new building being added to the school. The SRC could collect and provide student ideas and opinions about these changes, and take part in the planning. The SRC support teacher might be a good source of information, or you might need to ask the principal before the SRC meeting to find out what's going on in your school.

Different types of activities

There are lots of different activities that SRCs can work on – and that have worked in other schools. As you brainstorm, make sure you have at least one idea of something you could do in each of the following areas. You can also look back at what the SRC did last year. Did they cover all the categories? Which areas had no action? Should you make a point of addressing these areas this year? Consider:

- representing students' needs (advocating or standing up for individuals or groups of students)
- curriculum (subjects, school organisation, learning and teaching approaches)
- rules (student input to school or classroom rules)
- school culture (student relations and wellbeing)
- community action on issues outside the school (e.g. safety or racism)
- physical infrastructure (this could include improving school facilities or the local environment)
- fundraising
- social activities
- inter-school SRC networking

You might like to fit your brainstorm into a table (e.g. on a whiteboard) like the template provided in **T3: Brainstorm of SRC activities** (see Part 5). The left-hand column of this table could be filled in before the meeting (steps 1 to 5 in the activity that follows) to save time and keep the focus on the year ahead, or the first part could be done in a training activity that reviews what has been done in the past.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

At the end of last year, the SRC held a day to look at what they had achieved. They realised that they had spent a lot of time on a few activities – mainly social events. Some students challenged the SRC as to whether those were the important things that it should be doing.

The new SRC at the start of this year brainstormed what it wanted to achieve. Most of the ideas were about improvements within the school that students had been talking about for several years. They also heard from the principal that the Year 9 curriculum was going to be reviewed, and suggested that they could be part of that review to provide information about what Year 9 – and other – students thought.

The SRC decided to make these areas a priority for action.

Using template T3: Brainstorm of SRC activities

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template in a training activity to help you brainstorm your SRC activities.

Step 1: Introduce the activity and its purpose. Draw the Brainstorm table on the whiteboard or hand out copies to all SRC members.

Step 2: Break the group up into small teams (it might be the SRC or perhaps students who were on last year's SRC).

Step 3: Give each team an A4 sheet of paper. Ask each team to write a list of all the things the SRC worked on last year.

Step 4: A whole sheet of paper represents everything the SRC did last year. Ask the group to cut up the piece of A4 paper to show approximately how much of the year was spent on each topic. For example, if you spent half your time and energy organising lunchtime activities and social activities, then that should be about half A4. If you spent five minutes talking about whether to have French taught in Year 7, then maybe that's a tiny scrap of paper. (But try to be really definite and simple about what you did. Break up an area like 'Social activities' into exactly what you did – and how much time you spent on each activity.) Write the name of each activity on the bits of paper.

Step 5: Now stick the bits of paper against each row in the table to build up a rough graph of the areas you worked on as an SRC. Summarise the results in the left-hand column of the table.

Step 6: Ask: What do we notice? Why did we spend this amount of time and energy on this and not on this? Write down your reflections.

Step 7: Add into the table any commitments to do things that members of the SRC have made for this year – this is the middle column.

Step 8: Add any other opportunities or ideas that you know about (e.g. invitations from the principal for the SRC to respond to school planning).

Narrowing down our ideas

Conduct the brainstorm within a strict time-limit (otherwise it can go on forever) and begin comparing the different ideas:
- What inspires students most?
- What is the biggest area of need?
- What is achievable for us this year?

It's a good idea to keep in mind the situation of the SRC:
- What sort of reputation, support and capacity have you inherited from last year's SRC?
- In what sort of position do you want to leave your SRC for the next year?

For more about the long-term phases that SRCs go through and how to assess where you are in this cycle, refer to **section 2.3: Long-term thinking: SRC phases.**

The aim of the discussion at this point should be to prioritise or narrow the ideas down to about two or three major objectives or projects for the year. If you think the SRC is up to it, you could add some other 'second level' priorities.

These priorities might not emerge naturally from your group discussion or you might not all agree easily. However, you should be able to eliminate some ideas and narrow the list down to less than 10 favourites. Then you can take a poll of the room using one of these two methods:

• **Voting:** Everyone is given three votes. Run through each of the options and ask students to vote up to three times. Tally the number of votes for each option.

• **Sticky dots:** Have a roll of coloured sticky dots available and give three dots to each SRC member. Put each remaining idea on a separate piece of paper and put these on the wall. Give everyone a few minutes to place their three dots next to the ideas they like the most. This can allow for small group discussion to occur while students place their dots. This approach can also allow students to put two or three dots on one idea – if they feel really strongly in favour of it. Count the dots given to each idea.

• Depending on the time available, you might just take the top two or three ideas decided on. Alternatively, you might want to have more discussion about including some that just missed the cut-off point – perhaps as a second set of priorities. Don't let this take too long. The important thing is that you end up with clear agreement on your **key objectives** for the year ahead.

Follow-up

Promote your intentions
Once you've agreed on your key objectives for the year, you will need to communicate them to your stakeholders: other students, staff and the principal. Stakeholders are the key people or groups you relate to in your work as an SRC. These can be people you want to help (e.g. students), people you need something from (e.g. principal, school council), or anyone affected by decisions you make or actions you take (e.g. teachers, parents or local businesses).

For more on stakeholders, check out **sections 3.9: Links to school decision-making** and **3.10: Links to the wider school community.**

Your follow-up lets them know you're on the job. Good communication here can also prepare the ground for future actions and requests. If other groups know what your plans are, this can also mean you are more accountable: at the end of the year, you will all be able to compare your plans with what you actually achieved. Use this as a motivating factor to help you achieve your goals. It can also encourage you to be realistic and to only promote the key objectives you think your SRC has a strong chance of achieving. There can be some internal SRC objectives that are more appropriate to keep within the SRC – but, in general, there is no harm in signposting your intentions to all your stakeholders.

2.3: Long-term thinking: SRC phases

2 Growth phase

The second SRC has been around for a couple of years. It's working reasonably well, but has the potential to do a lot more. You now have a mix of some experienced members and several new members with fresh energy and ideas.

In this phase, it's time to think bigger and 'outside of the square'. It might be time to let go of some smaller projects and transform them into something bigger. Or you might set up a subcommittee of more experienced SRC students and students from outside the SRC to keep these important projects going in ways that don't take up all the core energy of the whole group. If you're not sure where to direct your new energy, you might like to seek ideas from the student body, SRCs from other schools, or ask your principal about any opportunities for student involvement and consultation. Being realistic is always important, but now is the time to be ambitious and challenge yourselves. If you are realistic, a failure or two won't matter and these can be great learning opportunities. You don't know what the SRC is capable of until you try!

1 Establishment phase

The first SRC is new. It's either being formed this year or last year, and there is no established tradition or expectations of it. This can be an exciting time; it's up to you to shape your SRC and its future.

In this phase it might be important to pick just one or two small-to-medium-sized key projects or changes – and make sure you do them well. This will help to shape the SRC's reputation for success, and this will be invaluable when you want to take on bigger projects or advocate for substantial changes.

It will also be important for the group to focus on establishing its internal processes, such as holding effective meetings, and establishing clear lines of communication both within the SRC and with key stakeholders. Keep an eye on the energy and commitment within the group; sometimes this can peak high and early – and slip away very quickly. Focusing your action on achieving small but quick successes can be important in transforming the group's initial energy into ongoing momentum – and this helps you grow your successes.

As well as thinking about specific objectives for the year ahead, it's also useful to think about how you want your SRC to develop in the future. This involves thinking about how the SRC has operated in the past and what you are like now.

Here are some possible situations based on examples of SRCs at different stages in their development. These SRCs thought about what they could do and what their priorities were at each stage. Their responses might fit your SRC.

4 Rejuvenation phase

After some great years in the past, the fourth SRC hasn't quite met everyone's high expectations from last year. Maybe the number of students wanting to join the SRC has dropped off – so you might need to alter your recruitment process or just see if you can find more volunteers to help with specific projects. On the other hand, you might have some fresh new faces ready and willing to help out.

You need to evaluate why the SRC's momentum has stalled and consider:

- Was there a failure to train young members to take over from departing Year 12s?
- Did the SRC 'bite off more than it could chew', resulting in a large failure?
- Is there a lack of support from the school administration?
- Is the SRC out of touch with the student body?

There could be lots of reasons, often working in combination. It might be worth asking previous SRC members for their insights. However, don't spend too long trying to agree on the reasons; it's probably complicated and understanding the main points might be all that's needed. The most important thing is to agree on the plan from here and build enthusiasm for it.

Whatever happened, you now need to plan for some small and uncontroversial successes that will remind everyone about how good an effective SRC can be. If you understand the reasons for the decline, you can plan deliberate strategies to:

- reconnect with the student body
- build relationships with the school administration, or
- develop a program to train up younger members of the SRC before the experienced ones depart.

Remember: With fresh energy and the right strategy, there's no reason why your SRC can't return to its former glory!

2.4 Establishing SRC roles

You need to decide on the roles you want to have on your SRC. For example, you can have a regular president, who is usually the chairperson of meetings; or you can rotate the role of chairing a meeting, so all members get to learn these skills.

But there are lots of other specific roles too. If everyone on the SRC has some particular job for which they are responsible – and important for the SRC's success – they are more likely to be an active contributor to the team. This section outlines two ways you could allocate roles on your SRC – but you can also adapt these or do it another way to suit your SRC.

Model 1:
SRC executive roles

The traditional model used by many SRCs is to appoint an executive team of key student leaders. These often include the **president, vice president, treasurer, secretary** and the **publicity officer**. Brief role statements for these are outlined on the next page. Sometimes, it's expected that these executive roles will only be available for senior students; in that case, junior students can take on **assistant** roles to learn what is involved. In other SRCs, any student can take on these roles if they have an interest and are competent in that area. There are also roles for other class representatives.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• There is a clearly identified leader of the SRC. • This empowers a small group or even one person to make decisions between meetings when necessary.	• It places a lot of responsibility and pressure on one or two key people. • It doesn't empower everyone to feel they have an important role. • It can create an elite group within the SRC.

Model 1: SRC executive roles

These role descriptions are fairly general. You will need to look at them and decide specifically what you want each role to involve. You might want to mix or change some of these jobs.

Role	Responsibility
SRC President	• represents the SRC (and the school) at official functions – on behalf of students • chairs SRC meetings • coordinates SRC actions and has an 'overview' of what the SRC is doing • has a leadership role within the SRC, making sure everyone is involved and working as a team • talks with the school's leadership team and with teachers, as appropriate, about issues discussed and decided by the SRC • attends school council or board meetings where appropriate
Vice President	• supports the president as required • chairs meetings if the president is absent • mentors new and younger SRC members and helps the president to involve everyone
Secretary	• lets members know when and where a meeting is to be held • prepares an agenda for the meeting, in consultation with others • keeps records of SRC meetings: the minutes • makes sure each representative gets a copy of the agenda and minutes • handles all correspondence to and from the SRC
Treasurer	• handles all the financial dealings of the SRC • prepares a budget for SRC finances • keeps a record of money received, money paid, and bills received • investigates cost of items or activities • presents financial reports and recommendations to meetings • liaises with the school business manager
Publicity Officer	• coordinates all the publicity and promotion of the SRC • makes sure that articles about the SRC are in the school newsletters and other appropriate publications • makes sure that the SRC website is up to date • manages the SRC noticeboard
Class Representative	• communicates between the SRC and students • attends all SRC meetings • presents student ideas, concerns and suggestions to SRC meetings • provides regular opportunities for students to present and discuss their ideas and opinions

Model 2: Portfolios

An alternative approach is to give every SRC member one or more portfolios. These are areas of responsibility. The SRC can decide on and define these each year to fit the jobs that need doing and according to the skills of SRC members.

Some of these can be continuing jobs to do with helping the SRC to operate through the year. Other portfolios can be around some specific issue or action that the SRC is working on. Some of these portfolios might last for a short time, while others can keep going for longer – it just depends on the nature and amount of work to be done.

If you have responsibility for a portfolio, you don't have to do all the work in that area, but you do have to be responsible for making sure it gets done. You also need to communicate well with those in other portfolios who might rely on you. Some portfolios can require a group of students to assist, in which case the portfolio manager becomes the coordinator of that group.

Alternatively, you could have a system where everyone has the lead responsibility on one portfolio and then acts as a back-up to someone else in another portfolio. In that way, each portfolio has two students who can work together.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• It spreads out the responsibilities and includes everyone.	• This system can break down if good communication between portfolios isn't maintained.
• It enables roles to be adapted to individual student skillsets.	• It can result in unclear or overlapping responsibilities.
• It creates and builds a sense of teamwork.	• It can overlook some area of work that needs to be done.

Model 2: Portfolios (shared leadership)

Role	Responsibility
Meeting Coordinator	- lets members know when and where a meeting is to be held - prepares and circulates the agendas and minutes - sets up the room and organises food for the meetings
Chairperson	- conducts SRC meetings using agreed meeting rules - keeps the meeting on track, following the agenda and making decisions - makes sure everyone has a chance to speak and is heard - remains impartial in matters being discussed
Public Spokesperson	the public face of the SRC — addresses school assemblies and makes other speeches as required
Treasurer	role as described on page 65
Publicity Officer	role as described on page 65
Website Manager	- maintains the online presence of the SRC - regularly updates online material - encourages students to engage with the SRC online
School Council Representative	- represents students on the school council - reports to the SRC about what the school council is doing Note: This could also relate to SRC representatives on other school committees, e.g. Buildings and Grounds.
Principal Liaison	builds a positive relationship with the principal and maintains good communication between the principal and the SRC
Social activities / free dress day Coordinator	- coordinates the running of different social activities for students - coordinates dates, themes, and money collection - collects donations for free dress days
Curriculum Coordinator	- represents students on the school's Curriculum Committee - reports back to the SRC about curriculum issues
Wellbeing Coordinator	- represents students on the school's Student Welfare or Wellbeing Committee - manages and responds to requests for advocacy from students in need of SRC support
Interschool Liaison Coordinator	- represents the SRC on interschool networks - liaises with the VicSRC - coordinates registration for events like regional conferences and the VicSRC Congress
Constitutional Advisor	- is responsible for making sure that the SRC operates within the rules of its constitution - advises the SRC if processes or authority is disputed - could coordinate the writing of a constitution if the SRC doesn't have one

Role of the SRC support teacher

At the same time as you decide on the role of the SRC students and the SRC representatives, you should discuss exactly what role the SRC support teacher(s) will play.

Section 1.6 outlines the broad role of the SRC support teacher(s) but the details of this might need to change each year in response to the needs and capacities of the students on the SRC.

Once students have their roles defined, they should discuss what sort of support they would like from the SRC support teacher. This might vary from student to student or throughout the course of the year as students become capable of doing more themselves.

Possible levels of support that teachers might provide

Level of support	Description
• Active (high level)	• plays an active role in meetings, helping to keep the SRC on track and to ensure that good decisions are made
• Advises and assists (mid level)	• provides advice in the meeting only when necessary and lets students manage the process and make decisions themselves
• Remains in the background (low level)	• remains silent in meetings unless given permission to speak • between meetings is there as a back-up for students or to do tasks students can't do, e.g. driving to shops for emergency supplies or leaving notes in staffroom pigeon holes

The teacher gives students an adult/teacher perspective so that students can understand better the processes that are in place in a school. The teacher also offers opinions when asked and can put things on the SRC agenda – as can students. Home group teachers from each year level also take on the role of SRC convenor. These convenors report to year level coordinators' meetings about SRC work.
Secondary College SRC

In **section 1.6**, there is an activity for developing a 'Wanted' poster for the SRC support teacher. You could do this activity here too.

The following activity supports the SRC to audit who takes responsibility for various tasks and aspects within the SRC and looks at the balance between student and teacher responsibility for running the SRC.

See **section 2.5: Planning the year ahead** for more on this.

Activity: Audit of student and teacher responsibilities

The roles that students and teachers play in the SRC vary from time to time, but also can be seen differently by different people. This audit activity aims to start a discussion between SRC representatives and SRC support teachers about who is doing what, in order to seek opportunities for greater levels of student leadership. It can take place at any time once students and teachers have settled into their roles. Ideally, it would be undertaken as part of the SRC's half-year evaluation.

Ask students and teachers to complete the simple quiz presented in the following table by circling the scores that are closest to the way that the SRC actually operates (not how they think it should operate). Add up and then average the scores and enter these in the 'Totals' section below. Present the results to an SRC meeting for discussion and write in some possible actions based on that discussion.

Scoring quiz for deciding who in the SRC leads particular areas or function

No.	Leadership area or function	Teachers only	Mainly teachers with some student input	Teachers and students together	Mainly students with some teacher input	Students only
A	Organising SRC meetings: e.g. setting date, time, place, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
B	Setting the SRC agenda: e.g. deciding what is to be discussed	1	2	3	4	5
C	Chairing the meeting	1	2	3	4	5
D	Taking minutes and recording decisions	1	2	3	4	5
E	Providing background information to the meeting	1	2	3	4	5
F	Contributing ideas and views to the discussions	1	2	3	4	5
G	Voting and making the decisions	1	2	3	4	5
H	Implementing the agreed actions	1	2	3	4	5
I	Making sure that others complete their action commitments	1	2	3	4	5
J	Reporting and representing SRC decisions to the principal and staff	1	2	3	4	5

Totals

Area	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Average score by students										
Average score by teachers										

Possible actions to make the SRC more student-run:

1.

2.

3.

4.

2.5 Planning the year ahead

The school year is already packed full of days for this and weeks for that. If you want to get your SRC priorities on the school agenda you need to plan ahead. Use this section to help you to set up an annual calendar and then to slot some key SRC events into it to make sure they happen on time.

NEW In February, November can seem a long way away. However, if you're not careful the school year will disappear before you know it – and without the SRC achieving much. If you're new to SRCs, you might feel all your energy has to go into setting up the SRC, but you will also want to achieve things this year. So it's important to plan ahead to make sure you can fit everything in. This section will help you make sure you give enough time to achieve your main goals.

EXP Maybe you're established and planning ahead well but are finding that you can't adjust quickly when the situation changes. Or perhaps the SRC is getting to be so successful that the events it wants to organise are becoming more frequent and complex – and clashing with other school events. Where is there time for the SRC? Check out the evaluation approaches suggested here and build them into your plan.

Year-long thinking

The SRC should think and plan for what it can do across a whole school year. To help you do this, you need to find or draw up a calendar for the year.

➡ You can use **template T4: SRC year planner** to help with this (see Part 5).

Break the year into the school terms. Mark in the school holidays, public holidays, exam periods, interschool SRC events, sports carnivals, musicals, parent–teacher interviews and any other major dates that affect the whole school or are major year-level events. Now you can mark on the calendar what you want to achieve and when you want it finished by. But there are some limits on when you should plan these things:

In *Term 1* everyone is settling into the new year. If you can get something happening towards the end of term, then everyone feels the SRC is off to a good start. In fact, this is a good time to establish your SRC as an active group and to begin its first activity.

Term 2 has a short exam period towards the end. Remember that it might be a longer or shorter term depending on where the Easter holidays fall, but this is also a good time for starting activities.

Term 3 can be busy with assessment in the middle or at the end of the term. If you have a school musical or drama production, this is often when it's on. However, there is usually room somewhere for a major event or project.

In *Term 4* everyone is focused on exams and finishing the year's work requirements, so don't plan anything big at this time. Your main focus for Term 4 should be on selecting next year's SRC and ideally having some sort of handover session. This can take a lot of energy to do well, so you might not plan much else for Term 4. Mark them in on your calendar.

Take your key goals for the year and think about how much lead-up time they need and where achieving them might fit in the year.

January   February
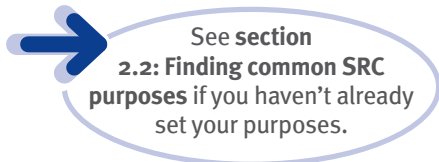
Backward planning

For each individual goal, it's useful to work backwards from the end of the year to the start – from achieving your goals to setting out each step required to get there. If you work backwards from what you want to have achieved by the end of the year, that will also help you work out when you need to start things. Mark your project beginning and end times on your calendar. When you plan ahead, think about the level of energy among students, staff and parents at different times of the year.

Put the completion dates for your projects, and the completion deadlines or timelines for significant planning steps into your calendar. Try and spread these out or at least make sure that different people are sharing the load if things have to be completed at the same time.

eg GOOD PRACTICE

An SRC wanted to organise a carnival day. It needed to book special food vendors and the entertainment a few months ahead. This meant that it needed to have a confirmed date and permission from the school – and that took a month to get. So the SRC used a year planner to organise its plans – when the carnival day would be, the amount of time each step would take, when permission had to be asked for, etc. They realised that they needed to start their planning from the beginning of the year.

SRC meeting dates

Don't forget to put your SRC meetings and the meetings of any subgroups that meet regularly onto your calendar. Planning all the meeting dates now makes the year run much more smoothly. It also saves time – you don't need to spend time at every meeting working out when the next one will be.

ATTENTION: It's important to leave some blank areas in your planner so that you can respond to new issues as they come up.

March   April   May   June   July   August

Evaluation

As the year goes by, it's easy to forget where you started or what you are learning. It can be really useful to take some regular time to look back and reflect. Book this on your calendar as well.

Half-year evaluation

An ideal time for a half-year evaluation is that little gap after exams at the end of Term 2. Everyone is 'coming up for a breath' and beginning to look forward to the last part of the year. An evaluation at this time doesn't need to take long, but reviewing a few simple things can help you get the best from the rest of the year:

- **Group agreements:** How is the group getting on together? Are you keeping to the commitments you made? Do these need to be altered or reaffirmed?

- **Year plan:** Hopefully, you have this planner at every meeting, checking that you are keeping to schedule or adjusting your schedule in response to events. Have you got to where you wanted to be? Look ahead: is the remaining time on the planner still realistic or does it need to be tweaked?

- **Open space:** Open the discussion to any comments students might have – maybe they don't get time to raise these in a busy meeting. Does everyone feel part of the team and able to have a say? Are there any new issues bubbling up from the student body that the SRC should be responding to?

For more questions to consider, see the resource document on the VicSRC website – **'R1 Criteria for effective student councils'**. This document is also referred to in **section 1.7** and **Part 6**. There is also an activity in **section 2.4: Establishing SRC roles,** which would be useful for this half-year evaluation. It supports the SRC to audit who is taking responsibility for various aspects and tasks within the SRC and looks at the balance in student–teacher responsibility for running the SRC.

End-of-year evaluation

This evaluation could be more structured. It could be run as part of an end-of-year celebration or handover session, after exams, when everything is finished and people are not so pressed for time. The purpose of this is to celebrate your successes and learn from your mistakes. What you learn will be useful for next year's SRC and also for individuals moving on to their next personal challenges. Start by listing the highlights and lowlights of the year and what was good and bad about each one. (One person's highlight might be another person's lowlight – for entirely different reasons.)

eg GOOD PRACTICE

One SRC's mid-year evaluation led it to realise that it had too few active students to do all the jobs it wanted to do. It restructured the SRC to involve more students who were enthusiastic to help.

Force field analysis

A force field analysis is a useful way of mapping the different pressures acting on the SRC. You will need to use a whiteboard or a large sheet of butcher's paper. Write 'SRC' in the middle of the page and draw a box around it (see the following diagram). Write 'failure' down the left-hand side of the page and 'success' down the right-hand side. Then draw arrows both inside and outside the box pointing from the SRC to both success and failure (see Figure 2.1 below).

Label these arrows with the forces you think contributed to your success. The arrows outside the box represent external forces that pulled the SRC to either success or failure. They might be a supportive principal, an apathetic student body, or a local community disaster (note these could all lead to success or failure depending on how the SRC responds). The arrows inside the box represent internal factors within the SRC that pushed you towards success or failure, e.g. internal competition, a lack of ideas, or poor inter-year-level relations. You can see these factors as promoting forces (forces that point to success) or blocking forces (forces that point to failure).

Look back over the year and think about what contributed to or affected your highlights and lowlights. Once you've finished you should have a diagram about your context. This can inform you about whether you need to work on your internal relationships or on improving your links with other groups in the school. Try to identify three-to-five key lessons or areas for improvement for next year's SRC. How can you build on the promoting forces? How can you overcome or restrict the blocking forces?

Figure 2.1:
SRC force field analysis
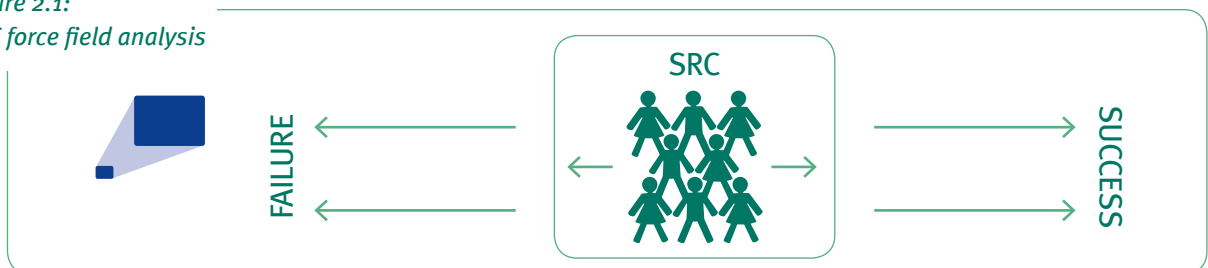
Using template T4: SRC year planner

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use the blank template T4 in Part 5 to help you draw up your SRC year planner. Start by adjusting it for the current year – check the length of each term and change the number of weeks if necessary. Check when holidays and other events fall. These have been put into the planners on the next page as an example for you, note that these events will vary from year to year.

For each of the four terms mark in the school holidays, public holidays, exam periods, interschool SRC events, sports carnivals, musicals, parent–teacher interviews and any other dates that affect the whole school or are major events. There are reminders about these in the template, but you will need to change them for your school.

Then add in the dates of your SRC events: meetings, committees, conferences, training days, etc. This planner has an SRC meeting every two weeks, but you will need to decide what suits you.

Keep using this planner as the SRC develops its goals and projects. You can add in events or deadlines. Work backwards from what you want to have achieved by the end of the year – that will help you work out when you need to start things. When you plan ahead, think about energy levels of students, staff and parents at different times of the year.

Example T4. SRC year planner

TERM 1

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.	Australia Day	Teachers only	Teachers only	Teachers only	Students start
2.				SRC meeting	
3. Yr 7 SRC Elections		Swimming sports			
4.				SRC committees	
5.					Student forum
6.			Athletics day	SRC meeting	
7.			Free dress day		
8.	Labour Day			SRC committees	
9.		Parent—teacher interviews			
10.				SRC meeting	
11.	Holidays				
12.	Holidays				

TERM 2

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.				SRC committees	
2.		ANZAC Day			
3.				SRC meeting	
4.		NAPLAN TEST DAYS			
5.			VicSRC regional conference		Free dress day
6.				SRC committees	
7.					
8.		VCE EXAM WEEK			
9.				SRC meeting	
10.					
11.	Holidays				
12.	Holidays				

TERM 3

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.				SRC committees	
2.					*School musical*
3.				SRC meeting	
4.		Free dress day			VicSRC congress
5.				SRC committees	
6.					
7.				SRC meeting	
8.		Carnival day			
9.				SRC committees	
10.					
11.	Holidays				
12.	Holidays				

TERM 4

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.				SRC meeting	
2. (Yr 11 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 12)				Free dress day	
3.					*VCE exams start*
4. (Yr 10 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 11)		Melb Cup Day			
5.					
6. (Yr 9 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 10)					
7. (Yr 8 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 9)					
8. (Yr 7 SRC elections for next yr's Yr 8)				SRC meeting	
9.					
10.					

3.1 What does a representative do?

So now you're a representative who has been elected...

...appointed or volunteered to represent a group of students. Maybe you're a class representative on the SRC, or perhaps you're a student representative on a school committee. This section contains some ideas about what being a representative means and how to be an effective representative.

But what does being a representative actually mean? Well, it's not something to take casually. You're not there to pursue your own interests or to make yourself look good. Your job is to voice the concerns of the students you represent and try to achieve the things they want. Think about how you would want your representative to behave – and act like that. It's quite a big responsibility.

You need to know what you intend to do in the job, have a plan for how you will fulfil the role and make time to carry it out. Your plan should include times to be visible and available to the students you represent, attend meetings, collect ideas and report to class and assemblies.

Being a good representative means always keeping in touch with what students want, and sometimes it means standing up for decisions and negotiating them with students, teachers or the principal.

Before a meeting

Don't just walk into a meeting without thought or preparation.
Think, prepare, organise!

- **Think** about what was discussed at the last meeting (look at the minutes), what is to be talked about this time (the agenda) and what you might want to say and achieve. Talk with other students about this before the meeting.

- **Prepare** your folder of notes and previous minutes, any reports you need to make, any motions (or suggestions) you want to propose, and your arguments for or against the items on the agenda. If you can't turn up to the meeting and have a good excuse, make sure you put in an apology before the meeting.

- **Organise** a discussion of the agenda in your home group, other representatives to support your views and for your proposals to be put on the agenda (see the chairperson before the meeting).

A checklist of the items you should bring each a meeting is provided **at the end of this section.**
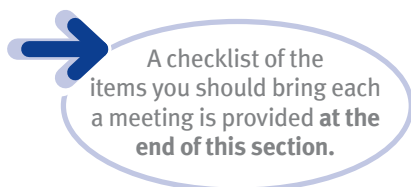
ATTENTION: You will also need to find out more information about the issues being discussed by doing some research and by talking with other students – that's being an informed representative (see the following section).

During the meeting

During the meeting, you need to keep focused on what's happening so that you can take an active part in discussions: giving ideas and putting forward other students' views.

Everyone is responsible for making the meeting a success – helping information to be shared and helping everyone to agree on what to do. That means everyone listens to others, considers their views seriously and tries to reach agreement.

If you want the meeting to decide something, you can put forward a motion and try to get support from other representatives.

It's a good idea to have a folder dedicated to SRC meetings. You can use this to keep all the meeting papers and notes together. Write down the important things that happen. Even at this stage, think about how you can make these things clear and interesting to your class group when you report back to them. This might lead you to ask questions that the meeting should consider now.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

The SRC provides all representatives with a clipboard folder for meetings.

During a meeting, the secretary keeps notes of what is happening and what has been decided (the minutes) on a laptop and these are run off immediately after the meeting. Within a day, all representatives have a copy of the minutes, including an action summary, to put into their folders. They can then use this as a reminder and an accurate record, to report to their classes and to assemblies in the next few days.

After the meeting

You have two main tasks to do after the meeting:
- to *take any action that you agreed to* in the meeting; and
- to *report back to other students* about what was decided.

You represent other students so you need to let them know the outcomes of the meeting, whether their ideas were accepted and what other ideas came up.

If the SRC meeting has decided on some action, you might have tasks to do: letters to write, people to see, activities to organise. There should be an action column included in the minutes. Make sure that you get these done by the agreed time.

What do you need?

All this takes time. You will need time to read and prepare for meetings, attend meetings, and follow up the actions you need to take. Some of this time might be in class: time to report, discuss and debate.

In all of these activities, you will be learning and demonstrating different skills and knowledge. Many of these are already part of the curriculum: public speaking, writing correspondence, keeping minutes, making posters, contributing to discussions, teaching other students, keeping a budget, etc.

There might be ways of getting your time, effort and learning recognised as part of your schoolwork. You may be able to get time to work for the SRC in class time and get credit for what you do. But you will need to negotiate this with your teachers in advance.

See **section 4.3: Credit and recognition** for help on how to get ideas and report back.
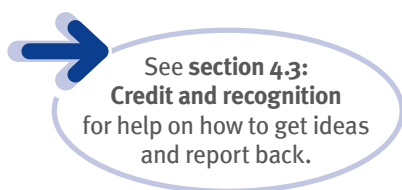
eg GOOD PRACTICE { Year 9 representatives can count the work they do for the SRC as part of the portfolio of achievements that they have to develop in class. The Year 9 teachers have agreed to recognise evidence of talks, meeting participation and reports about SRC business as equivalent to letter writing and other tasks within the curriculum.

The tough side of being a representative

Not all your work is sitting in meetings and making decisions. Your class might want to work on something as a group and need a representative to organise them. It might want something raised for discussion with teachers, and ask you to be their representative. Students might just be angry and want you to 'do something!'. You might have to listen to complaints and problems. Often the hardest thing about being a representative is not to take sides and help the group work out its own solutions.

After a decision is made, it's sometimes hard to stand up and speak for the group and its decision, especially if you personally disagree. If these things sound difficult, find someone to help you. There might also be a more experienced representative or the SRC support teacher who can guide you. There might be other representatives with the same challenges — in that case a training session could be helpful. You could get someone from the local SRC cluster or network, or from a training organisation to come and help run this.

Being a representative isn't always easy, but there is always someone to help, if you look hard enough. And if it were all easy – maybe you wouldn't be learning anything!

Checklist: Things to bring to an SRC meeting

SRC meeting checklist

- [ ] **Agenda**

- [ ] **Minutes from the last meeting**

- [ ] **Summary of ideas or responses from your class group**

- [ ] **Report on your actions from the last meeting**

- [ ] **SRC folder**

- [ ] **Pen and spare paper**

- [ ] **Laptop (if available and appropriate)**

- [ ] **Any documents relevant to topics being discussed**

- [ ] **Ideas of what you want to do and achieve in the meeting**

3.2 Informed representation

When you're a representative, you don't just present your own ideas. If you are to represent other students, you need to find out what they think too. You also need to know what you're talking about. This means investigating or finding out about a topic, and finding out what has already been happening. We talk about this as informed or investigative representation. Here are some ideas to help you.

Why is it important to be an informed representative?

To speak about a topic, you need to know something about it: the facts, what has happened before and what others think. Otherwise, you could come up with wrong ideas or ideas that are already happening. Any topic is likely to be more complicated than it appears at face value. You might know some details, but there's probably more to find out.

There are also likely to be different views on the topic. Other students will have different experiences and that means they will have different needs and ideas. You will need to represent these views as well as your own. The people you need to convince might also have different experiences and ideas, so you need to know and understand their views if you are to develop a convincing argument.

What do you need to think about to become an informed representative?

There are three areas in which you need to become informed:

- **Views (breadth):** You need to find out what other students think about the topic. What is their experience? Do they have different experiences? What do they think should happen? Why? What is the range of views? Make sure you find out from a range of students – not just students who agree with you.

- **Topic (depth):** You need to find out as much about the topic as you can. What does it mean? Why is it important? What are possible complications? What is causing this issue?

- **Background (length, i.e. history):** You need to find out what has already happened about the topic as well as what is happening now. What have students tried before? What have students already suggested? What happened? Who else is working on the topic?

How do you become an informed representative? How do you investigate?

Firstly, find out as much as you can about the experiences and views of *other students*. This is your special expertise. You can use formal methods like *surveys* or *interviews*, or informally *talk* with as many students as possible. Don't just choose your friends – choose students from different groups, different ages and different backgrounds, even different schools, if you can. You will need to ask them about what they have experienced on the topic, what they think about it, and what they think *should* be happening.

Secondly, you can *research* the topic in the usual ways: using the internet, looking in the media (newspapers, radio or TV), finding articles about the topic, interviewing people working in the area. Try to use a variety of sources and talk to a range of people. You can use professionals (teachers, researchers, community workers) to guide you to what will be useful.

Thirdly, make a special effort to **find others** who are particularly interested in, and already working on, the topic. You don't have to 'reinvent the wheel'. Others can help you with some history and background and let you know what groups have special interests in the topic – the 'stakeholders'.

Finally, **involve other students** actively in the topic. If they are actively interested and have different experiences, you could set up a working group of students to advise you and to act with you on the topic.

As you go, keep your ears open. You may never be completely informed, as the situation is often changing. Staying informed is an ongoing process. Even if you are at the centre of the SRC's action on an issue, you still need to know how the wider student body is responding to developments.

Also bear in mind that, as you find out more on a topic, other students may not have had the same opportunity to do this research. But they know things and have experiences that are different from, and just as valid as, yours. So make sure you continue to *listen* to them rather than just *telling* them what you now know.

Are they pleased with the SRC's actions? Dissatisfied? Or have they moved on to something else?

You don't have to change direction in response to every bit of feedback, but use each bit to shape your overall response.

Being a representative who investigates issues and stays well-informed will help both you and the SRC to be more effective.

3.3 Getting ideas and reporting back

As a representative, you will need to work closely with the group (e.g. class) you represent. You will get ideas from them to take to the SRC. They will then want to know what happened, so you should report back to them and let them know what did happen.

Standing up in front of a group might make you nervous – you might worry that they won't listen to you, they won't understand what you are saying, the topics are too complicated, or there is nothing interesting to report. But it doesn't have to be scary or boring. This section includes some ideas about making reporting to a group easy and interesting.

Prepare

The key to having a successful discussion is to be prepared. Don't just walk in and hope all goes well. Prepare what you want to say, what sort of response you want, and how you will present your report or get ideas. If you want a response, have specific questions ready to prompt the group's feedback. If you are prepared, you will be confident, and this will make what you have to say more interesting. Be clear about whether this is just a report, or whether you want some responses from the group – such as further ideas.

Bring a copy of the SRC minutes, an action sheet and your own notes of the meeting. Write an agenda for the discussion on the board, so everyone is clear what the topic is.

Make time

Don't be rushed. Plan when you can have this discussion, such as at a class assembly or in class. How much time do you have? Work this out with the teacher beforehand. Make sure everyone knows what is happening – don't spring it on the class or the teacher, or some people might resent it.

Talk with students individually

You don't have to use group meetings as the only way to report or get ideas. You can meet with individual members of the class, or with small groups. In this way you can also get their help for when you do get up in front of the class. You'll find they take it seriously and contribute ideas. But make sure you *don't just talk with your friends:* you represent *all the students* in the group.

Make a clear report

Remember that the group might be hearing about the things you report for the first time. Keep your language and the information simple and straightforward. What are the main points you need to tell them about? Don't get off the point and confuse them with lots of details. You can refer to these if students ask questions.

Don't use jargon (special language) that others won't understand. Explain what the SRC is trying to do. What is the main argument? What are the points against? What happened to your group's suggestions? What was decided? What action is now being taken?

Stop and ask the group to see if everyone understands.

Break the group into subgroups

You don't have to talk to or run a discussion with the group as a whole. After you introduce the topic, you can break the group into smaller subgroups and ask them to discuss the topic. These can be called 'buzz groups'. After some time (which could be two minutes or 10 minutes), ask each group to report back on their discussion and write a summary of this on the board (or you can ask someone else to record the discussion). You can get the subgroups all to talk about the same topic, or give each a different aspect to discuss.

Be creative

Some creative ideas are included on the opposite page.

You don't have to stand up and drone on. Don't just read out the minutes: talk about them or put up the main words on the board, hand out a summary or draw a diagram or picture. Think about different ways to give the report and get their interest.

Relate it to their interests

You should focus your report on the issues your class is interested in, particularly anything in response to suggestions they previously made. Maybe tell a story that they'll recognise about a decision. Make sure you consult them before things are discussed at the SRC meeting, then they will feel part of the process and be more interested to hear what was decided. Ask them what they think before you tell them about a decision.

eg If the SRC has been discussing a sports program, start by asking them about their sporting interests: Do they play sport already? What sports? When?

Use other students

Sometimes you might be able to get someone else from the SRC to come into your group to share your report. A different person can sometimes be taken more seriously: a Year 7 student to report to Year 12 and vice versa. But it's always better to have a student make the report than to get a teacher to do it.

Listen to the group

Students will give ideas if they know you're listening to them and taking their ideas seriously. That doesn't mean you have to agree with everything they say, but listen first and argue later. Sometimes arguing with them (respectfully) actually shows you are taking them seriously. You can also put in ideas, but make sure others are supported to speak first. It's essential that you can *listen* as well as *speak*!

The most important thing is that ideas are accepted in a positive way and not put down. If you make fun of students' ideas, or if you allow other students to make fun of their ideas, or if you behave as if you know better than them, then they will not contribute any more ideas.

Get others involved

If you can get the group active and involved, then you don't have to work alone on the topic. Can you set up a small subgroup to plan how the class might get involved? Use every opportunity to involve others actively.

eg GOOD PRACTICE { An SRC representative set up small task groups in her class around issues of cyberbullying that the SRC was considering. She persuaded their health teacher to allow time for these groups to meet and research in class time, and then she used the ideas they developed to bring proposals to the whole SRC for discussion.

Here are some creative ideas that students have worked out for getting ideas and reporting back.

Make a poster!

Put the main things that happened in the SRC meeting on a poster and pin it on a board in front of the class. Make it colourful and use cut-outs – it should leap out and grab them. Make a new poster for every meeting.

Use the whiteboard

Start the session with a few words or a drawing on the board to get the group's attention. If you can make them start to wonder what you're on about, they'll start to get interested.

Make a T-shirt

Print your report or the question you want to ask on a T-shirt. Wear it around the school before the discussion.

Do a survey

Make up a simple survey for the class. This could be a 'rate yourself' quiz or a serious questionnaire. Hand it out to the group.

AGREE ← ✕ → DISAGREE

Set up a formal debate

Ask members of the group to take sides for and against something that the SRC is discussing. Give them time to research and prepare and then present it to the group. (This might be something you can do in an English class.)

Organise a role-play

Act out the situation to help students understand what's happening and what's involved. Students could then try acting out alternative endings to the role-play. This can suggest ideas and get students involved. At the end, discuss what the role-play showed: what would happen in 'real life'?

Say something outrageous!

Are they awake? Are they listening? Will they notice that the SRC wants to have school on Saturday?

Perform

Present your report as a performance.

Student News Bulletin

Begin a student newsletter with information from the SRC, but also include contributions from other students. This could be handed out around the school, or read in all classroom meetings.

Film

Record your report and screen it in class. Students will pay more attention because it's on a screen, or if they're away they can find it later. Plus you can rehearse and re-record it to get it perfect and then present it to several classes without having to repeat yourself.

Blog

You could start a blog with reports from each meeting. Students can post their ideas and feedback as comments.

School radio

Use the school PA system to set up a radio station during lunchtime and recess. This can play music as well as provide announcements and news from the SRC.

Email

Use the tools suggested in **section 4.2: Using technology effectively** to set up an email list connecting students. Use this to efficiently get SRC news to students.

Using template T5: SRC representative feedback sheet

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

This template helps you keep track of what you need to report to your class, get responses, and bring back to SRC meetings.

The top half of the sheet is for you to take from the SRC meeting to class meetings. On the left-hand side, record all the issues that the SRC wants you to raise with your class. On the right-hand side, you can write notes about what the class said on each of these issues. You should then plan to take these responses to the next SRC meeting.

The bottom half of the sheet can be used to remind you of what to bring from your class to the SRC meeting. On the right-hand side, you can list the new issues that the class wants you to raise with the SRC. On the left-hand side, you can make notes about what happened to these issues at the SRC meeting, to remind you about what you need to report to the next class meeting.

The SRC asks the representatives to find out from their classes what they think about several issues: the date preferred for a mid-year student forum; views on the state of the toilets; ideas about language learning needs for next year. The representatives write these topics on the left side of the first form to remind them. When these issues are discussed in the representative's home group class, the class's responses to each issue are written on the right side of the first form, so that the representative can remember to report these to the next SRC meeting.

The students may also raise other issues that they want their representative to take to the SRC. These are summarised on the right side of the second form, so that the representative remembers to bring these up for discussion at the SRC meeting. When they considered at the SRC meeting, the representative writes down a summary of the SRC's responses or decisions on the left side of this second form – and these are later reported back to the class.

3.4 Organising a consultative forum

How does the SRC keep in touch with student issues and concerns? How do you find out what issues are of concern to students? Every SRC needs to get information from students. Individual representatives can do this through their classes (see **section 3.3: Getting ideas and reporting back** for some ideas on this), but the whole SRC might also organise some sort of consultative forum within the school. This section contains some ideas on how to do that.

Why consult?

You need to be clear about the purpose for your forum. This will affect how you run it and the approaches you use. Here are two main situations facing the SRC — both could be good reasons for holding a consultative forum. The following table will guide you through the process for each situation.

Figure 3.1: Process for a consultative forum for two common situations

Situation	
An issue has come up but the SRC doesn't know exactly what to do about it. There might be two or more opposing views about what the solution is.	The SRC doesn't have a sense of what students think the issues are. There is a need to search for new ideas.

Purpose	
To hear a range of viewpoints and seek agreement, if possible, before taking action.	To get student input on what is most important for the SRC to be working on.

When	
When the SRC feels it's needed – when an issue comes up.	Best done early in the year, i.e. end of Term 1 or start of Term 2.

How long	
Give yourself enough time for students to raise and discuss issues, but don't make it so long that students get bored. Perhaps a half-day will provide enough time; however, if all you can negotiate with the school is one period, you can still use this time effectively.	

Permission

This may require a major change to the school's timetable, so the SRC will need to propose the idea of a consultative forum to the school and get permission to organise it. You should do this very early in your planning. When you approach the school, you will need to be clear about why you want such a forum, as well as about all the organisational arrangements.

Who for

The forum is for everyone affected by the issue. If the issue only affects some students in the school, make sure that they're the ones who attend. If there are two sides to the issue make sure they are both well represented and that both sides feel that the forum is for them.

You should have a broad cross-section of the students you represent at the forum. You could run this for each year level, provided the representatives from that year level are willing to follow up by themselves. Or you might decide there is a particular group the SRC never hears from and organise a special forum just for them.

Promotion

You will need to work out some ways to encourage students to attend, especially if attendance is voluntary (if it's compulsory, you may have other issues about whether students will be cooperative or take it seriously). Work out what incentives you can offer: food is always welcomed, but also the SRC might be able to get movie tickets or other incentives through partnerships with local businesses or community groups.

Where

Organise a space within the school where you can be comfortable — and where students feel comfortable to present their views. It might be possible to get a space outside the school by working with local youth workers or community groups.

Format

You could have a debate by asking students with different perspectives to present their viewpoints, followed by questions and discussions. This might not reach a consensus, but it can enable the SRC to reach a decision based on an understanding of different student perspectives.

See the following section for more on how to run a debate.

You might run a small-group style forum where all students respond to questions in small-group discussion sessions and report back at different points. See the sample forum agenda for ideas on how to run this.

You could use a 1:2:4 process to collect action ideas from everyone and then prioritise them according to what students like the most or think are most important.

See **section 4.5: Tools for SRC decision-making** for ideas on how to do this.

Follow up

Make sure that all participants know what will happen with the outcomes of the forum. You will need to make time at your next SRC meeting to discuss any recommendations and, of course, to find out how everyone thought the forum went. Also make sure you provide some feedback to the school staff, and show them how valuable the forum was.

eg GOOD PRACTICE

The principal invited the SRC to conduct regular consultative forums for students on issues being considered by the school. One of these was organised each term. The school counsellor and some of the year-level coordinators attended to listen, but the SRC ran the discussion. At the end, they produced a report of what the students said and used this in SRC meetings to develop action plans – and these, in turn, were the basis for whole-school action plans developed by the principal and senior staff in partnership with the SRC.

Ideas for consultative forum processes

Efficient organisation

If the consultative forum has only a limited amount of time, make sure it's used efficiently and that it starts on time and ends on time. This is particularly important as students will have other commitments, such as classes, sport, lunch, etc., and it leaves everyone with a bad feeling if students are leaving before it's finished.

Trained facilitators

You will also need to organise and train group facilitators. These are members of the SRC (or other students who are interested in the event) who will lead and support discussions. It's important that you have SRC facilitators who know what they're doing. Arrange a session a week or more before the forum in which you work through the details of the day, and also talk about how groups can be facilitated. It might be possible for the SRC to get someone to come to the school to help train the facilitators (local youth services might have someone available), or the SRC support teacher might be able to arrange or do this. It's also important that people who are facilitating the discussions know how to deal with distractions; make sure that the discussions keep flowing; that everyone gets a chance to speak; and that someone is recording the ideas being raised. A facilitator can also raise questions like 'What about ..?' to make sure that all matters are considered.

GOOD PRACTICE {

A good facilitator knows that what matters in these consultative forums is getting other people's opinions, not giving their own.

Forum program

Whether you are dealing with a specific topic, or searching for student ideas, there are some common elements of the forum program that you should include.

Firstly, make sure you introduce the topic or the question. Then plan to do some warm-up activities that are related to the topic, to get students talking and sharing — but still focused on the issues. Where possible, break into small groups, with an SRC facilitator for each group. Ask small groups to report back to everyone in engaging ways – use posters, skits, mime, etc. Make sure that someone from the SRC is recording ideas and opinions. Plan all this before you start.

Here are some specific suggestions of how you might conduct your forum, or of elements to include in it.

Running a debate

If you have a specific issue to decide on, one way to do this within the forum is to have a debate, with students presenting different opinions.

Start by having someone neutral (perhaps the facilitator) outline the issue and establish any relevant facts. (Students with opposing views might see the issue differently so you might need to give them a chance to describe the issue as they see it.)

Then use a format that you've agreed on beforehand for students to present their views and suggested solutions for the issue. You could use a traditional 'three speakers' model including rebuttal, or allow just one or two speakers from each side followed by questions from the floor. Make sure that all speakers contribute something constructive to the debate.

After the debate, open the discussion to all who attended to seek suggestions and feedback on the points that were raised. If the debate is heated and oppositional it can be difficult to get everyone to agree on a solution then and there. However, the debate should provide an opportunity to air issues so the SRC can then go away and make an informed decision based on broad student feedback.

Running a search forum

If you are looking for ideas about what issues to tackle or need to gather student experiences and proposals on a topic, then a 'search forum' might be more appropriate. Some ideas for the program of a two-hour forum are given in the sample forum agenda on page 93.

Think about the risks

Why can it be difficult for an SRC to run a consultative forum? What are the risks?

Students who have run forums – some successfully, some not so successfully – say that they were worried about attendance (maybe no one will turn up); or that students would treat it as a joke (and not give serious opinions); or that students would be cynical (and not believe their views would be listened to seriously); or that they would have no ideas at all.

How will you deal with these fears and risks?

Many of these concerns may come from the past experience of students. If ideas have not been taken seriously, or if no action has resulted, then students are going to be cynical or suggest silly things – or not turn up at all. But if the issue is one that is really important to students, and you show that the SRC is taking students' views seriously and doing something about them, then small successes will build into very successful forums.

In particular, if there is an opportunity for students to express their views at a forum, and have them immediately responded to (e.g. by a panel of SRC representatives and teachers) then the SRC will come to be known as a group that organises worthwhile consultations. So it's vital that the SRC reports back to students on the forum outcomes – about the action that the SRC took and about the outcomes of this action.

GOOD PRACTICE

In one area, students from a cluster organised regular half-day forums in each school. All students took part, with SRC leaders organising discussions in cross-age groups. Teachers were present to supervise, but weren't otherwise involved.

At a plenary session at the end – like a school assembly – a panel made up of students from each discussion group presented their ideas and recommendations to another panel of teachers and community representatives – who then responded. The recommendations were then put together and considered by the SRC after the day. The day involved some fun activities as well as the discussion groups.

eg Sample forum agenda

Time	Activity	Details: how
1.00 pm	*Opening: welcome*	Open the forum and welcome everyone; explain why the SRC has organised the forum and what its hopes are, including what could happen with the outcomes.
1.10 pm	*Warm-up activity*	Run a quick warm-up activity, designed to get everyone relaxed and talking. See section 2.1 for examples of warm-up activities.
1.20 pm	*Small groups #1: Question: What is your experience of the topic?*	Break the participants up into groups of manageable size – the size will depend on how many students you have, the space/s available and the number of facilitators. Small groups (ideally six to eight students) will be more productive than big groups.
		Write up the question that you want groups to consider, e.g. on a PowerPoint slide. Ask each group to come up with something concrete in response, e.g. make a poster or develop a skit.
		The first question should be very concrete: 'What is your experience of ..?' 'Show us what happens in the school about ...'.
1.40 pm	*Report back*	Ask each group to report back, by showing their posters and (if there is time) telling or showing everyone what their main point was.
1.50 pm	*Small groups #2: Question: What is causing the issue?*	Now it's time to go deeper into the subject. The next question is: 'What is causing this?' Again, the same groups can brainstorm. You might want to ask: 'What is your evidence for that?'
2.10 pm	*Report back*	Again, groups should report on their reasons. This time, you could summarise the main points (on a whiteboard or PowerPoint slide). Add new reasons and group similar reasons. An electronic whiteboard will allow you to drag points around, and group similar ideas together.
2.20 pm	*Small groups #3: Question: What should happen?*	Finally, ask the groups to consider 'What should happen?' They should be encouraged to present ideas in creative ways, but also to think of unusual possibilities as well as ordinary ones. This is a slightly faster session.
2.35 pm	*Mini-congress: decision-making*	Instead of reporting back, you could finish with a formal congress session. This is like a mini-parliament, in which each group formally presents their most important idea as a proposal for a brief debate and then a 'decision'. It should be clear that these are recommendations to the SRC for further investigation, debate and possibly action. (After all, two hours is too short a time to get all the information you need about any topic.) You might not get through all the groups – but impress on the participants that all ideas will be looked at seriously by the SRC.
2.55 pm	*Close* *Thanks* *What now?*	Close the forum by thanking everyone and by being clear about what will happen with the outcomes. When and how will the participants hear from the SRC about these issues?
		Do a quick evaluation of the forum, either with a short flier survey, or by asking for any comments from participants about whether it was worthwhile, or what could be done better next time.

3.5 Effective meetings

Effective meetings of the SRC are essential if you are to achieve anything. This section first discusses decisions you'll need to make about when, where and how often to meet. It then provides ideas about what should happen before, during and after an effective meeting. There is also information here about decision-making approaches, and about evaluating your SRC meetings.

Regular meetings are the lifeblood of the SRC. They are the times you have together to share information, to discuss issues and to make decisions. It's important that they are effective. This means that you need to be clear about your role and about the roles of others in a meeting. You also need to know what to do before and after meetings to make best use of the meeting time.

Could your SRC meetings run more effectively? Do you wish discussions didn't just become arguments or that students could get on better and work more constructively? Are your decisions clear, or do people come back to the next meeting wanting to discuss the same issue? This section will help you to solve some of these problems.

Decisions about SRC meetings

The SRC might or might not have options about when and where to meet, but you need to talk about this and make clear decisions on it. If possible, the whole group should decide, so that everyone's needs are considered.

When to meet

SRCs can meet during **class time, before** or **after school,** or during **lunch** or **recess breaks**.

Class time

The best time to meet is during class time. This allows the SRC plenty of time. It also demonstrates that the school values the work of the SRC and believes the roles played by students and teachers are part of the core business of the school. Being on the SRC is a great learning opportunity too, so the SRC should be seen as part of the curriculum.

See **section 4.3: Credit and recognition** for more on this.

If you do meet during class time, rotate the time of day or week that you meet so that students aren't always missing the same class and getting behind in their work.

Before or after school

If you can't meet during class, the next best option is before or after school (however, this might be difficult in areas where students use school buses or have jobs). This demonstrates the level of commitment of SRC members! A good incentive is to provide some breakfast or afternoon tea to share at the meeting. Decide together on a morning or afternoon that suits most students.

Lunchtime or recess

If none of the above work, then you are left with lunchtime or recess. You can still run an effective SRC that meets then; you will just need some good strategies for managing your time. Perhaps you can provide lunch for everyone, or make a special arrangement with the canteen so that all the SRC lunches are delivered to your meeting room at the start of lunchtime.

eg The SRC meets during class time, when the SRC support teacher isn't teaching. The best time is just before lunchtime, so that meetings can keep going if necessary, and lunches can be brought into the meeting. All the representatives looked at their timetables and worked out the best days. They also let their teachers know (so they wouldn't be marked absent), and arranged for someone else to keep notes for them.

Where to meet: Ideally, you have your own SRC room with a filing cabinet and storage space.

See **section 4.1: Resourcing the SRC** for ideas on this.

You could see if a school meeting room is available, or you might be more comfortable in a classroom. Whatever you decide, try and meet in the same room every time so there's no confusion about where the meeting is.

eg GOOD PRACTICE The SRC has its main meetings in the school's board room. This is big enough to fit the whole SRC without too many problems, and it also means that everyone is sitting around one table. The SRC books use of this room with the school office, and has these meetings written into the school's calendar.

How often?

This depends on how much you want to achieve and on the availability and commitment of SRC members. Some groups meet every week, while others meet fortnightly or monthly. It can be a good idea to alternate between meeting as a whole group and meeting in smaller subgroups. The small groups can be working groups to work on publicity or on planning a particular event – or they could be used to discuss something controversial and bring a recommendation to the whole SRC. This sort of discussion can save time in the bigger meetings.

eg GOOD PRACTICE The SRC meets every second week, but only once a month as a whole group. In the alternating weeks, it meets in smaller working groups to carry out tasks decided by the whole meeting. These working groups also meet at other times (mainly lunchtime) and then report to the main SRC meeting with proposals for action or simply to keep everyone informed.

" " *The whole SRC and the executive meet on alternate fortnights (the executive also attends general SRC meetings). Meetings are for 50 minutes at lunchtime, plus one 50-minute lesson directly after lunch. Year-level SRC meetings occur during lunchtime.*
Secondary College SRC

Making meetings effective

Now that you have decided *when*, *where* and *how often* you are going to meet, you're well on the way to having effective meetings. You will still need to agree on some basic guidelines for meeting behaviour, and decide what sort of decision-making process you are going to use (*see later in this section for more details*). This section will explain how to use those decision-making processes and some of the roles required in the meeting.

Before the meeting

- **Notify people:** Make sure everyone knows when and where the meeting is being held. Use a couple of ways to let people know (e.g. school bulletin or SRC noticeboard) to make it easier for everyone to find out. Have a particular contact person as the meeting organiser so that everyone knows who to check with about any last-minute changes. This doesn't have to be the support teacher!

- **Set and circulate the agenda:** The agenda is the list of things to be discussed at the meeting. It's best if setting the agenda is coordinated by whoever is chairing the meeting so that they know what has to be discussed and can allow time to fit everything in.

  There are some basic things that should happen at every meeting – these are called 'standing items'. But other items will change for each meeting. The chairperson or organiser can ask everyone to submit items for discussion by a set time (e.g. a week or two days before the meeting), write up the agenda and circulate it to everyone ahead of the meeting so that members can consult on any issues they need to. Sometimes it's useful to have a small group to set the agenda; this could be the SRC executive.

  If you forget, you can set the agenda at the start of the meeting by simply calling for agenda items, allocating an amount of time for each item, and deciding on their order for discussion.

- **Organise the minutes:** Make sure that someone is organised to take minutes (a formal record) of the meeting. These don't have to be a record of everything that was said, but should include details of what was decided, and who is going to do what action. Sometimes it's also useful to record the main points of a discussion.

Template T6: SRC meeting agenda can be adapted for use in your meetings (see Part 5).

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

The SRC's meeting organiser reminds members of the date and time of the meetings. She asks for suggestions for items to be discussed – these have to be handed in three days before the meeting. She then works with the SRC chairperson and the support teacher to make up the meeting agenda. This is given to all SRC members the day before the meeting.

It is clear from this agenda who is chairing the meeting and who is taking the minutes. It's also clear what information is needed from all other members and how much time it's expected each item will take.

Template T7: SRC meeting minutes can be adapted for use in your meetings (see Part 5).
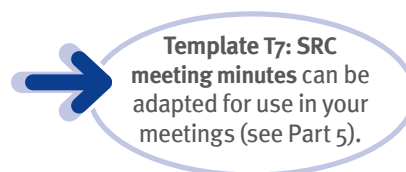
Beginning the meeting

- **On time:** Try to start on time but make sure you have enough students present so that you can make decisions that will be accepted by everyone. You might set a minimum number of students present – a quorum – before you can officially start to make decisions. As students are gathering, this can be a great time to catch up and check in to see how SRC members are going. If someone is having a difficult time at home or school, this could help them to keep participating in the SRC by making it a supportive environment.

- **Space:** If you're meeting in a classroom, set up the room for an effective discussion. Move the chairs and tables so that everyone is sitting in a circle and can see each other.

- **Welcome:** When you're ready to start, welcome everyone and record who is present and the name of anyone who couldn't make it and sent apologies. Some groups like to start with an Acknowledgment of Country that recognises the traditional owners of the land and is a way of seeking reconciliation with Koorie people. This can be a simple statement like: 'We recognise that we are meeting on the lands of the (insert the name of your local Koorie group) people and pay our respects to their elders past and present'.

- **Review the minutes:** The first item of business is to review the minutes (the formal record of what happened) of the last meeting. These should be confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting. It's then logical to hear reports about any actions that were agreed upon ('business arising from the minutes').

- **Reports:** You then should hear other reports: from any subcommittees that have met since the last meeting, from representatives on the school council, or a finance report from the treasurer. You could rotate these so that each person or subgroup reports every second or third meeting.
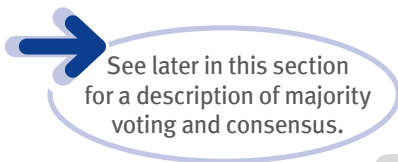
eg   **GOOD PRACTICE** {

It is clear to all members what has happened as a result of the last meeting. Students report back on action that they committed to take and explain what happened – or sometimes why they haven't been able to complete the work they undertook. This then means that they are asked to report to the next meeting.

Decision-making in the meeting

The meeting then considers, discusses, debates and decides on the issues on the agenda. This is the main purpose of the meeting.

- Clear processes: It's important that you have a clear decision-making process that everyone understands and you can use efficiently. Without this, you might drift along with nothing being controversial but then not know how to decide on something big – and you might finish up debating the process instead of talking about the urgent issues. Without a process, you can also just talk without moving to a solution. On the other hand, if your process is too formal it can waste time and confuse and frustrate people.

There are two main processes that you can use to make decisions: majority voting and consensus. Of course, you can make your own modifications to suit your group.

See later in this section for a description of majority voting and consensus.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

Everyone in the SRC meeting is clear about how decisions will be reached. Early in the year, the SRC decided at a training day to try to reach consensus on proposals, and decided to vote on ideas if agreement couldn't be reached within the time available. They also agreed that, if a vote was close, they wouldn't make a final decision but ask members to consult further, to find out more and to think about ways that the next meeting could come to agreement.

- Clear about the issue: First though, whatever decision-making process you use, it's important to start by being clear about the issue. Ask: What is the current situation? Who is affected? Who is bringing the issue to the SRC?

Don't start your discussion with a proposed solution – because this can be confusing for students who don't know all the background. Even if someone has already suggested a motion (proposal) for action, start from the beginning and allow enough time for students to ask questions before you move into the formal discussion. It will save a lot of time later if everyone starts on the same page.

The chairperson needs to let the meeting know that this is a time for general discussion – including questions and answers – before the formal debate, and also to decide how much discussion time is needed. If the decision is a small or obvious one and there is already a proposed solution, then the chairperson might decide to move quickly into making a decision on that proposal. Otherwise, you might need to spend more time having a general discussion about a range of possible solutions, and the pros and cons of each one, until a preferred solution emerges. However, even for simple issues, check that everyone understands it and that all questions are answered before you move to debate a proposal.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

Everyone in the SRC meeting is clear about what is happening. The chairperson usually starts by suggesting an open discussion of the item, in which anyone can ask questions or put forward ideas. Within the time allowed, the chairperson then asks someone to make a definite proposal. This is then debated and a decision reached.

Decision-making approaches

Majority voting

This is the traditional approach used by many groups. In its most basic form, someone moves (puts forward) a motion (proposal) outlining the action the SRC should take. The chairperson asks if someone seconds the motion – to make sure that at least two people in the meeting are in favour of it. The mover and seconder are given the chance to speak in favour of this motion for a limited time, and then someone else is given the chance to speak against it. If the topic is controversial, you can have more speakers for and against – alternating. Each speaker should only raise new points for or against. Sometimes it's useful to restrict the number of speakers. Once you've heard all the arguments, the mover has the right to reply and sum up (but cannot introduce new points). Then the motion goes to a vote.

The simplest way is for the chairperson to call for all those supporting the motion to raise their hands, then all those against to raise their hands. You only need to count if the vote is close, or if someone requests this. The decision is made for the side that has a majority of votes; this is usually defined as the side having more than half of the votes, but you could require a vote to get two-thirds or 75 per cent support to be agreed on. Sometimes a secret ballot is used, where everyone writes their vote on a piece of paper and hands it to the chairperson. The advantage of this is that everyone feels free to vote as they want; since no one else will know how they voted, no one can pressure them into voting any particular way.

Majority voting can be quick and clear, but results in 'winners' and 'losers'. It can leave some members of the group feeling that their ideas and views have been ignored.

Consensus approach

This approach is becoming more popular with many groups. It's based on the principle that we should try to include all points of view in making a decision, and therefore reach a better decision that has stronger support. Again start with a period of general discussion first – to make the topic clear – then a motion. Once you have a proposal, the chairperson tests for consensus on this by asking who agrees and who doesn't. If everyone at this stage agrees, then consensus has already been reached.

If there are students who disagree, one or more of them can be asked to state their concerns. If these are minor concerns, then they might be willing to respect the will of the majority, put these concerns aside and let consensus be recorded.

If they have major concerns, then the chairperson can ask for an amendment (change) to the motion to accommodate these concerns and again test for consensus on the changed proposal. You can repeat this process as many times as the meeting has time and energy for it. Sometimes this can be worth doing for a while, but it's important that everyone is committed to working towards a consensus resolution, not just stalling the process by talking forever.

If you can't reach a consensus because one or more students feel so strongly that they continually block the proposal (it is helpful if they are open about doing so), the meeting can decide to move to a vote. In this case, a 75 per cent majority is usually required to pass the motion to maintain the principle of only deciding if there is broad support. Alternatively, if the matter is not urgent, the proposal can be taken back to classes for consultation and then brought to the next meeting for further discussion and a decision. The extra time might allow the group to reach consensus.

Ending the meeting

Once you have worked through all the items on the agenda, it's important to end the meeting well. Even if you have more business to discuss, you should take the last five minutes to do three important things.

1. **Action summary:** Make sure that all of the decisions that you made are recorded in the minutes and that specific students have agreed to be responsible for carrying out the actions that are required to make these decisions happen.

eg GOOD PRACTICE {
At the end of the meeting, the chairperson asks the student taking the minutes to summarise the decisions made, and the actions decided on. The names of those who are to take action are recorded in the minutes.

2. **Evaluation of the meeting:** Take a couple of minutes to hear from everybody about how they thought the meeting went and how it could be improved. There are some questions below that you can use for this reflection. If your meetings aren't going well, they will only improve if you take time to evaluate them and work out how to improve them. Sometimes, the best way to do this is to hear from the students who don't speak as much as others do, as they might have observed more of what happened in the meeting.

? Evaluation questions

Here are some questions for students to consider before offering their evaluation:

- Did the meeting start on time?
- Did you get through the agenda?
- Did you finish on time?
- Is everybody having a say?
- Are some students talking more than others? Who? Why?
- Did everyone listen without interrupting?
- How do students respond to strong differences of opinion?
- Did the meeting feel friendly and cooperative?
- Did the chairperson do a good job? How could they improve?
- Were the decisions well recorded?
- Were decisions from the last meeting acted on? How did this affect today's meeting?
- Was the meeting fun?
- What was the biggest difficulty in the meeting?
- How could the meeting be improved?

3. **Next meeting date:** Hopefully, you have set these at the start of the year, and they are in your year planner, but always confirm these and remind students of the date and time of the next meeting.

eg GOOD PRACTICE {
In each meeting, the last few minutes are spent checking with all members about how the meeting went. The chairperson asks all members to say what they think was achieved in the meeting, and whether they have any suggestions as to how it could have been better.

Using template T6: SRC meeting agenda

T

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to draw up an agenda for each meeting.

1. It starts by recording who is present at the meeting and who has sent an apology.

2. The agenda should name the purpose of the meeting and who is chairing or facilitating the discussion.

3. The previous meeting's minutes should have been circulated, so there needs to be space for these to be accepted as a true record of that meeting.

4. The agenda then includes items to allow SRC members to report on any matters that were followed up from the last meeting, any correspondence that has been received or sent, and any reports from representatives or working groups.

5. Finally, there is space on the agenda for any SRC member to raise other items under general business. If these are known, they should be named on the agenda. Don't forget to leave time at the end to remind members about the date, time and place of the next SRC meeting.

Using template T7: SRC meeting minutes

T

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to record what happens in the meeting: the minutes.

1. The minutes start by recording the date, time and place of the meeting, who is present, who has apologised, who is chairing the meeting and who is taking these minutes.

2. For each item, record the name of the topic, a brief summary of the discussion and then – most importantly – exactly what decision was made. You could include details here, like the name of the mover and seconder, or the vote.

3. The last column of the minutes is for a record to remind everyone what action is to be taken.

4. Finally, record information about the date, time and place of the next SRC meeting.
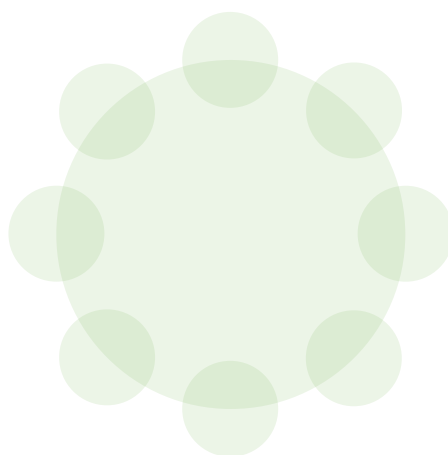
? Roles in the meeting

Roles in SRC meetings

Here are some brief guidelines about different roles in SRC meetings:

Chairperson
The chairperson is in charge of what happens during the meeting. They have the power to introduce a topic, say how it is to be discussed, decide who gets to speak and for how long, and call for a vote or test for consensus on motions put forward. Their job is to make the meeting run as smoothly and efficiently as possible and make sure that everyone gets a turn to speak. They might keep a list of students who want to speak and call on them in order. They should not speak for or against a motion in a debate. They need to keep the discussion focused on the topic and guide the meeting to a decision within the time allowed. A timekeeper can be appointed if you want to watch the time during discussions and keep the chairperson informed on how time is going.

Co-chair
The role of the co-chair is to support the chairperson to run the meeting. Having a second person to help can be great moral support for the chairperson. It's best if the co-chair sits opposite the chairperson so that, between them, they can see the whole room clearly. The co-chair can also help keep an eye on the time and make sure the chairperson doesn't get caught up in the debate. If the chairperson wants to participate in a particular discussion, the co-chair can temporarily take over the role of chair to allow them to speak.

eg GOOD PRACTICE
Chairing the SRC meeting is rotated between all members, so everyone learns that skill. The co-chair becomes the chairperson for the next meeting. They also keep a watch on the time and whether the meeting is keeping to the times allowed on the agenda. (They are not too strict on this – sometimes it's valuable to let discussion go on, and catch up time later, or defer some items until the next meeting.)

SRC members
All SRC members have important roles to play in meetings. The most basic role is that of listening. Members are there to make decisions – which means hearing other students' concerns and then forming your opinion on the issue. Members need to read the agenda before the meeting and consult with those they represent to help form their opinion.

See **section 3.1: What does a representative do?** for more on this.

If you think something is being missed in the discussion, then speak up when you have something to contribute. There might be a whole issue no one has mentioned, in which case you should think about this before the meeting, ask for it to go on the agenda and be prepared to tell everyone about it. Perhaps you can propose one or more options for action that the SRC could take.

All members can also help to make meetings run effectively by not repeating what has already been said and by making sure that the discussion doesn't go around in circles or off the topic.

SRC support teacher

The SRC support teacher can play many roles in a meeting. This depends on the capacity of the students to run the meetings effectively and on what you agreed about the teacher's role at the start of the year.

If the students are experienced and trained well, they should be able to run the meeting themselves. Some SRCs even have a rule that the teacher cannot speak without permission from the meeting. Then the SRC uses the SRC support teacher as a resource person who knows more about some of the school systems and processes. For example, students might have an idea but are not sure how the staff or the principal might receive it, and ask the support teacher for advice or comment. Remember, the SRC support teacher usually cannot speak on behalf of the principal. Other SRCs often find it useful to ask the SRC support teacher to comment more generally on issues within the meeting.

If students are less confident in meeting procedures, then the SRC support teacher might need to take a more active role to support the chairperson in running the meeting or keeping order. This should be seen as part of the practical 'training' of the SRC members in procedures, so that they are increasingly capable and confident to run their own organisation.

eg

GOOD PRACTICE

The SRC support teacher attends all the meetings (or arranges for another teacher to attend if they can't) but tries to remain silent. Sometimes, the chairperson asks the teacher for assistance or advice, and sometimes the support teacher asks to provide some information. In these cases, the teacher behaves like any other member of the meeting: puts up their hand and waits for permission to speak.

Before the meeting, the support teacher has talked with the chairperson and the meeting organiser about the agenda, what they want the meeting to achieve, and any areas of concern about processes. After the meeting, the support teacher spends some time with the chairperson, discussing how the meeting went, what was learnt, and what needs to happen now.

Non-SRC members

SRC meetings can and should be open to anyone in the school community, especially other students. Visitors don't have the right to vote; you don't even have to give them permission to speak. However, it's sometimes really useful to hear a different perspective from outside the SRC. It can also be useful for other groups of students who want to understand why the SRC has a particular view to observe the SRC's discussions. You can, of course, close meetings – where you don't let non-members in, particularly when you are discussing something sensitive – but meeting in secret can also antagonise other groups or create an elitist reputation for the SRC.

eg

GOOD PRACTICE

All students know they can attend SRC meetings. The SRC lets other students know about the meeting. The agenda and the minutes of the last meeting are put on the SRC noticeboard so that everyone can read them. (They are also given to the SRC support teacher and the principal.) Sometimes, when there are items being discussed that are of particular interest to a class or to a specific group of students, these students are specifically invited to attend the meeting. Mostly they observe the discussion, but they can also ask and be permitted to speak when relevant.

3.6 Responding to issues

SRCs are often asked to respond to issues that students face in the school. These might be issues that the SRC itself becomes aware of, for instance a problem with the toilets, concerns about racism or bullying, boredom, etc.; or others might bring this issue to the attention of the SRC. Perhaps the issue comes from a request from the school's leadership team, or from a particular class, or even an individual student – or from an SRC consultation with the student body. This section contains ideas about the process that the SRC can go through to organise its action on an issue.

See **section 3.4: Organising a consultative forum** for more information on this.
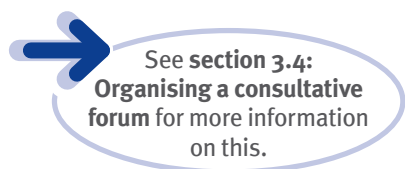
How can the SRC respond?

There's a simple five-step method that the SRC can use to respond to any issue. It provides a checklist to make sure you haven't forgotten anything. As with any process, you need to adapt it to your circumstances. These steps could be done faster if you're already clear about the issue, or are certain that you know as much about it as you possibly can. This method is called DIVAE, standing for define, investigate, vision, act and evaluate.

DIAVE Method

| Step		Action
1.	Define	Start by clarifying the issue and making sure you are all talking about the same thing: What is the issue about? Do you all agree on its definition? It's also useful to check the 'symptoms' of the issue: Why is it an issue? Why are students raising it? What are students experiencing?
2.	Investigate	The second step is about finding out all you can about the issue, so that you have the information to go ahead and make decisions. Some of the key things you will need to find out include what is happening now, the background to the issue – what has happened before, what is causing the issue, etc. **Section 3.2: Informed representation** might help you here.
3.	Vision	In this third step, the SRC develops a view about what could or should be happening. What would the ideal solution look like? The SRC could ask others for ideas, brainstorm possibilities or even run a whole-school competition.
4.	Act	After working through the previous steps, the SRC can now define the actions that it wants to take. A useful process is to write up some separate posters: the vision (aims or desired outcomes) on one poster, then a second poster on the changes (practical changes to get to the vision) that would be needed, then a third poster on the actions that the SRC can take to make these changes. **Section 3.7** has some ideas about action planning to make sure you achieve your outcomes.
5.	Evaluate	The final step for the SRC is to look at what was achieved and decide what was learnt. Did you achieve what you wanted to? Have your actions made a difference to the issue that was raised originally? How do you know? You might need to repeat some of the steps to achieve an outcome you are happy with. And some of your questions will be about the processes you used and what you learnt for the next time you go through this process: What helped you to achieve your outcomes? What made it difficult? What could have been done better? What would you do differently next time?

eg
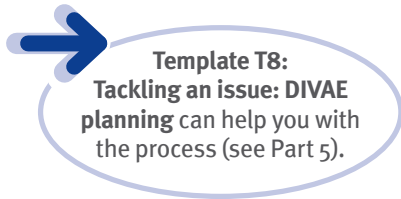
Good Practice

{ The SRC never makes any decision without finding out as much about the issue as possible. Sometimes this involves postponing a decision until more information is available. They might ask the student who proposes an action to come back to the next meeting with a clearer idea of why it's important, what's behind the issue, what's already happening and what is proposed.

Using template T8: Tackling an issue: DIVAE planning

T

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to help you plan how to tackle an issue. It takes you through the five-step DIVAE process, where you first define the issue, then investigate it, develop a vision of what it could be like, work out what action you need to take, and finally evaluate what happened.

There are some prompt questions in italics in each box of the template. As you answer these, delete the questions.

You can also adapt this template if you need to add in extra steps to help your planning.

3.7 Organising events

After your SRC makes a decision about what it wants to do, you need to organise yourself to make it a reality. This might be action that you take in response to an issue you have been considering, or it might be an action to organise an event in the school or community.

This sheet has some ideas about organising an event to help you break it down into smaller steps, to get these into order, allocate jobs to students and check that you have thought of everything.
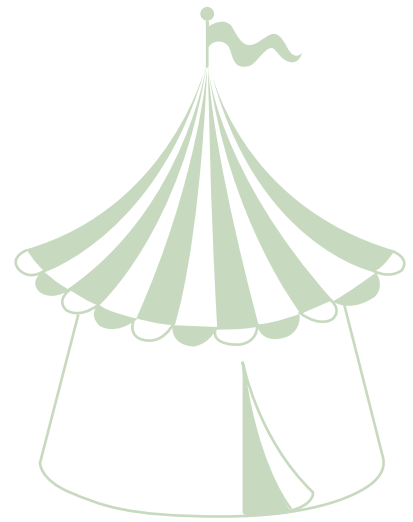
Use template T9: Action planner to plan events or other actions (see Part 5). In the steps below, this symbol shows where you should add some details into your SRC year planner.

Event planning

There are four important stages in organising an event. The first stage is deciding on exactly what you want to achieve with the event and who it will be targeted at. Once you have a clear goal you can begin planning all the different tasks you need to complete to make the event a success. The third stage is actually running the event itself – which should be easy if you've done stages 1 and 2 well. Then there are important things to do after the event that will help make future events more successful.

Stages of organising an event

Stage 1: Deciding directions	
Purpose or desired outcome	Make sure you have a clear vision of your desired outcome. What do you want your event to achieve? It could be to educate people on an important issue, to convince people about something, to find out something through a consultative forum (see section 3.4 for specific tips on this sort of event), to raise money, or just for fun – or it could be a combination of these and other purposes. How do you want students to feel when they leave your event?
Audience	Who are you targeting? Is this an event for students? What sort of event or action is likely to involve them?
What's possible	It's easy to dream big when planning events, especially when everyone has such great ideas. Before you decide exactly what sort of event you will run, make sure you do a reality check. Think about what sort of resources will be required to make your event run successfully. How many of these do you already have? Will it be possible to get what you need to make it happen? How?

Stage 2: Planning and preparing Once you are clear on your big direction and purpose, it's time to fill in the details that you'll require to make your event a success.	
Brainstorm the action steps	In preparing for any event, there are lots of small tasks that each seem quick and easy to do but, which put together, make up a really big project. The bigger the event, the more planning you will need to do and the more time you will need for it. But even with a small event, break it down into even smaller steps.
Step 1	On separate pieces of paper, write down all the things that you can think of that you might have to do before the event. Don't evaluate these – just gather ideas, e.g. 'Get permission from the principal', 'Book a room', or 'Put a notice in the bulletin'. Each idea will probably remind you of some other ideas that are needed before that one can happen, or as a follow-up. Sort the action steps into order: Some tasks depend on others to have been completed, e.g. you can't do your publicity or sell tickets until you've decided on a date, time and venue for the event and have permission to run it.

Step 2	Spread these pieces of paper out on the table or the floor. Work out what comes before what, and what step could be happening at the same time as another step. Does doing one step depend on another step being completed? Add in any other action steps that now become obvious.
	This creates a timeline for your actions. When you have decided on this, write it down in order, e.g. in **template T9: Action Planner** (see Part 5), or stick your pieces of paper to a large sheet, and use this to check where you're up to.
	Allocate jobs: There are lots of tasks to do so it's great to have a team of students for the different roles.
Step 3	For each action, decide who will do it. Write their name on the piece of paper. Also decide when it needs to be done by, and write that on the paper as well. Build some spare time into your timeline so that you don't end up doing everything at the last minute.
Put a summary of this into your action planner	You can also use this process to create a second timeline for the event itself – the *event plan*, starting with a welcome and finishing with a send-off. Use the same planning steps to write down the order in which things will happen, how much time is required, and who is responsible for different roles.
Resources	You need to think through all the physical, financial and human resources you will need for each step both in the planning and the event.
	Record what you need and where you will get these resources from.

Stage 3: Running the event

The big day has arrived!	Make sure that everyone is feeling confident about their roles and that they know what they have to do and when. Everyone should have a copy of the event plan with times and responsibilities clearly marked.
	Make sure you have an overall event manager. This person acts as the communication point and can also make quick decisions about any changes that are needed in the schedule if things don't go as planned.
	Use your event plan to keep track of how you're going: Are you on time? Do you need to speed up? Does anyone need help? Don't forget to make time for cleaning and packing up at the end.

Stage 4: After the event

Clean and pack up	When the event finishes, make sure that you leave the space tidy – as you found it. This will ensure that your requests for future events are regarded positively. Your plan should include knowing who has responsibility for cleaning and packing up.
Evaluate	As soon after the event as possible – or if appropriate before the event formally finishes – you need to evaluate how it went – before people forget! As part of the event, seek feedback from the students and teachers who participated. Did they enjoy it? Do they have any ideas for improvement?
	Sit down with the organising group to debrief and swap your perspectives on what happened. What was achieved? Did we meet our goal? What were the overall impressions? Would we run the same event again?
	Ask for ideas on how the event could be even better. What have we learnt from this experience? What would we do differently next time?
Post-event follow-up and publicity	Follow up your event or action by publicising what you did. You might let students and staff members know about the outcomes of the event or action; you might share information in a school newsletter or website; you might write an article for the VicSRC. This helps to remind people that the SRC ran the event to meet an important student need and boosts the image of the SRC.

Checklist: the Ws

When you are planning your event or action, check that you have answers to the following questions:

- What?
- Why?
- Who for?
- When?
- Where?
- Who by?
- How?

Using template T9: Action planner

T

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to help you draw up your own action plan for organising events or responding to issues. This action planner follows on from template T8: Tackling an issue: DIVAE planning.

The action planner takes you through the steps you'll need to think about when you're organising anything – an event or a response to an issue. Before you start thinking about the steps involved, you'll need to think about what you want to achieve (*your goal*), *why* you're doing it, *who* the target audience is, likely *objections* and your *responses* to these.

Then you can think about all the steps that will be involved. Brainstorm these on separate pieces of paper, and sort them into order first. Use your action planner to record these steps.

Write in who is responsible for each step and a *timeline* for when they must be done.

Note what *resources* you need and who can help.

Finally, think about the *evidence* you'll need to *evaluate* how well your action plan worked, what was achieved and what you learnt.

3.8 Promoting the SRC

What do the students think of the SRC? What does the principal think? What messages are you sending them?

What others think about the SRC is important because it affects whether they will take you seriously and support what you are trying to achieve. If the student body and the principal think you are full of good ideas or persistent at getting what you want, they will take notice and support you.

This section contains some ideas about how you can promote your SRC to make it more effective.

You'll probably spend your first few months trying to understand the SRC from the inside. This is important – but you already bring a valuable viewpoint to the SRC. Remember what you thought of the SRC before you were a member – from the outside. Your view on this will be really valuable for advising the SRC on effective publicity. Publicity is about the SRC communicating its message to the rest of the school community. If you can maintain a fresh view from both perspectives, you'll be able to help shape that communication to maximise its effectiveness.

If you feel like your SRC isn't appreciated for everything that it does, or if you haven't been getting as many people to your events as you would like, this could be because you're not doing enough publicity or because your message is not getting through to your audience. You might need to check with students that are new to the SRC to get a fresh perspective on what students think of the SRC from the outside. You might need to look at the following ideas and rethink how you present the SRC to the school and community.

Image

See **section 2.2: Finding common SRC purposes** for more information.

What sort of image do you want the SRC to have?
Think about your key goals for the year.

Do you want the SRC to be seen as being good at action? Fun? Listening and supporting? Whatever it is, come up with a few key words describing how you want to be seen. Use these to shape and inform all the publicity that you do – everything from posters to newsletter articles, to stunt advertisements.

You might have a recognisable SRC colour, a logo that you use on all SRC communication, or an SRC mascot. When people see any of these, they should immediately think of the SRC and what it does, so choose these images to carefully represent what you want to say about your SRC. If you don't already have a logo, you could design one that fits your image. You could commission a class to design a logo, or invite students to contribute to a competition.

This discussion could be with the whole SRC or start with just a small group who want to work on publicity and who then bring recommendations to the whole SRC for approval.

It's important that all SRC members work towards projecting the same image. If all your posters are about 'listening' and some SRC members don't make an effort to listen to students, then people won't believe your publicity and you will have a major credibility problem. Your publicity needs to be based on the truth.

Practical ideas for promoting the SRC

Appoint an individual or group

Once you've settled on an image, appoint a group or individual to be responsible for thinking about ways to promote the SRC. These should be students who have (or want to learn) skills in public communication.

See **section 1.5: Who should be on an SRC?**

If you have a group for this, appoint one student to coordinate the group and report back. This doesn't mean that they have to do all the work, but they have to lead the promotion group and the SRC in thinking about effective promotion methods.

Tell others what you are doing

Make sure that the SRC reports to school meetings: assemblies, year level meetings, class meetings, roll calls, pastoral meetings, etc. This is the responsibility of all members of the SRC – to be an active, open and positive representative of the SRC, as well as a representative on the SRC.

Recognise SRC members

Everyone in the school should know who the SRC representatives are. This could mean placing photos on a noticeboard, wearing special badges or holding a special induction ceremony. Certificates could be provided by the principal at the end of the year, recognising achievements.

Note achievements

When the SRC achieves something, make sure that the role of the SRC is publicly noted. If, for example, the SRC successfully campaigns for improved toilet facilities, make sure that there's a notice in the toilets acknowledging the SRC's work.

Publicise

Put up posters around the school about the SRC and the importance of its work. The SRC could run a competition for students to design this poster. If the school has a video-noticeboard, make sure that there are slides on it about the SRC. Develop an SRC website (see section 4.2) or an SRC section of the school's website. Have a regular SRC column in the school newsletter.

Accessible members

Make it easy for all students to provide information and requests to the SRC. The best way to promote the SRC is to make sure that all its members are approachable, good at listening and focused on what they can do for the students who appointed them. The best promotion and publicity will occur when representatives meet with their home groups or class groups.

See **section 3.3: Getting ideas and reporting back**.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE**

When the toilets were painted, the SRC put a notice in the toilets publicising that this was the outcome of the SRC's work. They also wrote an article for the school newsletter about the process they went through and the importance of a healthy and safe toilet block.

3.9 Links to school decision-making

If the SRC is to be effective and have influence throughout the school, it needs good links to the school's decision-making people and structures. On a personal level, that means the SRC needs to have a supportive relationship with the school principal and other members of the school's leadership team. But also, on an organisational level, the SRC needs to be connected to the school council, committees and working groups operating throughout the school.

> *Older student representatives are involved in school council meetings and liaise with the leadership of the school in decision-making for the benefit and future of the school.*
> **P–9 College SRC**

We talked in Part 1 about the ways that an SRC works: by doing, by asking, by sharing decisions and by raising awareness. See **section 1.2: What can SRCs do?**

The SRC needs to know who the appropriate people are to ask or the appropriate groups with whom to share decisions. This section will help you investigate the school's decision-making processes and find out where to focus your requests and action.

At first, you might find it hard enough just to learn how the SRC works. However, the SRC can't operate in isolation from the rest of the school. To understand the structures and decision-making processes of the whole school will take a bit of time, but doing so can make a big difference to the effectiveness of the SRC and to your effectiveness as an individual representative.

Do you find yourself arguing with people and getting frustrated that they keep saying no to the SRC's ideas? Maybe you're just confused about how the school's decision-making operates? This section provides ideas on how to build a better relationship with other school leaders so that you can better understand their perspective and they can better understand yours.

In both cases, let's start with who makes decisions in the school.

Who are the decision-makers?

> *Each year, our students select two proposed members for our school council. These representatives are then automatically members of the SRC. The SRC also proposes student representatives for appointment to the Buildings and Grounds, Curriculum, and Student Wellbeing subcommittees of the school council.*
> **Secondary College SRC**

Decisions are sometimes made by *individuals*, but are more usually made by groups of people – often in **school committees**. Within these groups, some individuals will have more information and particular influence. Sometimes these groups can make a final decision, but they are often responsible to and advise a more senior group. For instance, a Buildings and Grounds Committee might be a **subcommittee** of the school council, and then can only make recommendations to the school council for a final decision. You need to understand how these groups relate to each other and where the power really lies.

The most senior group in the school is probably the school council. This group will be responsible for making the final decisions, but it might delegate some decisions to a person or to some other group. Who are the members of this council? Is the SRC represented on it? (If not, can it be?) How can the SRC present information and proposals to it? (When does it meet? Who organises the agenda for it?) Here, links with your school's parent council or club will be valuable, as they are probably represented on the school council.

Why is knowing this important?

Different people and groups in the school make all sorts of different decisions. If the SRC is to influence them, you need to know who to approach about a topic. You could waste time and effort if you are talking with people who aren't involved in decision-making in that area. And if you go to someone more senior (e.g. the principal), without consulting and discussing it with the people directly involved (going 'over their head'), they might not be receptive to your ideas.

Secondly, if you know what groups are working on a topic that the SRC is interested in, you might be able to get the SRC directly represented on that group – and take part in the final decision, rather than just asking others to act for what you want. Often these groups assume that students are not interested in their activities. Just establishing a relationship can create new opportunities by finding out what they are doing.

Thirdly, there might be groups in the school who can support the SRC in what it wants to achieve. For example, there could be several school bodies, like a parent council, association or club, or a Student Wellbeing Committee that you can approach to discuss your plans and ask for their support.

Personal links

Members of the SRC should make sure that important members of the school know them well. Among these, make sure you report regularly to:

- the principal and the school daily organiser, who can help with rooms, timetables and supervision of activities
- the school business manager, who can help with financial matters, including SRC accounts
- the front office staff, who can provide access to mail, photocopying, greeting of visitors and you never know what else!

It will also be important to make sure that SRC members know active parents within the school, who might be on the parent council, association or club. And, of course, all SRC members should make sure that the teachers associated with their classes or home groups are fully informed of SRC activities.

eg

GOOD PRACTICE

In one school, members of the SRC use an 'adopt a teacher' approach. Every SRC member is allocated one or more teachers to liaise with. After each meeting, the SRC members meet with their teachers to inform them about what happened and what actions are planned. This makes sure that there is good communication throughout the school – and 'no surprises'.

Organisational links

It's not just individuals who are important in making decisions in a school: different groups and committees exist – and these differ from school to school.

Do you know:
- Who makes the decisions in your school – individuals and groups?
- What bodies and committees exist? Who is on them?
- What do they make decisions about?
- Who else is involved in making these decisions?
- How do they link together?

The following training exercise — **Mapping the school —** will help you discover the organisational links in your school.

An SRC should know the answers to these questions – or at least some of the answers. But your SRC might need to find out other answers before you start taking action.

Mapping the school

This is an in-school 'Students as researchers' exercise that can be run with students of any age; the level of complexity can be adapted to the age range. It requires at least an hour; it may be better to run it in two sessions a week apart.

Finding out about who makes the decisions in your school can take some time but the process of mapping the school is a valuable one. You can use this training activity to help you do this. By spending some time doing this in detail, the SRC can work out how decisions are made in your school on topics that concern the SRC – and the SRC will be much more effective in knowing who to approach. This information should be kept by the SRC, so that you gradually form a large map about how overall decisions are made in the school.

The aim of this activity is to draw up a 'map' of how decisions are made in a school by asking questions, such as:

- *Who makes the decisions in our school - individuals and groups?*
- *What bodies and committees exist?*
- *Who is on them?*
- *What do they make decisions about?*
- *Who else is involved in making decisions?*
- *How do they link together?*

Step		Action
1.	**Brainstorm existing knowledge**	Ask the group what they already know about who makes decisions in the school. Which individuals? What groups exist? What decisions do they make? Do the individuals report to and/ or are responsible to others (e.g. other committees or individuals)?
		As students contribute information, map this onto a whiteboard, checking about details: *'Who is on this committee?'*, *'What do they look at?'*, *'How often do they meet?'*, and *'Who do they report to?'*
		This builds up a first map of what is known – a 'box and arrows' diagram *(see figure 3.1).*
2.	**Defining what we don't know**	Perhaps more importantly, your map also starts to define what is not known. It suggests questions like *'Who would know what this group does?'* and *'Who do we need to ask about this?'*
		Ask students to look at the diagram and identify any gaps in knowledge about what bodies exist, meeting times, powers, etc. Mark these in a different colour or write these up on the map as research tasks.
3.	**Finding out from others**	Then ask: *'Who can help us fill in the gaps?'* Identify available 'sources' of information in the school that could provide information. Set up small volunteer research teams to undertake research tasks: a group of three members of the SRC might choose to interview the principal with some questions. Another group might volunteer to attend a meeting of a canteen committee and find out who they are and what they do. (Someone might need to arrange for key people to be available at that time, so that the student research teams can go off and interview them and bring the information straight back. Or you could do this over a longer time period e.g. a week, and ask that the information be brought back and shared at the next session.)
4.	**Reporting back and improving the map**	The research teams get together again and report what they found. This might mean they correct, clarify or add to the map: what a person or committee makes decisions about, who is on the committee, when they meet, and who they report to. Keep going until all are reasonably happy that your map represents how decisions are made in the school.

Step		Action
5.	**Examining the map — how does it help us?**	Look at the map and ask questions: **'***Where are students already represented?***'** and **'***Where should they be***?'** Also think about a particular topic and ask **'***Who do we go and see about this issue?***'**
6.	**Sharing the map**	Discuss how you could **share** this information with other students, so that everyone knows who to approach, when to see them, and how to do it, in order to get things done. You might even be able to share it with supportive groups, like the parent council, association or club, who might not know about things like timetabling processes. This could be done by making your map public on a noticeboard, or including a summary of it in the school diary.

Figure 3.1:
Example of a school decision-making map
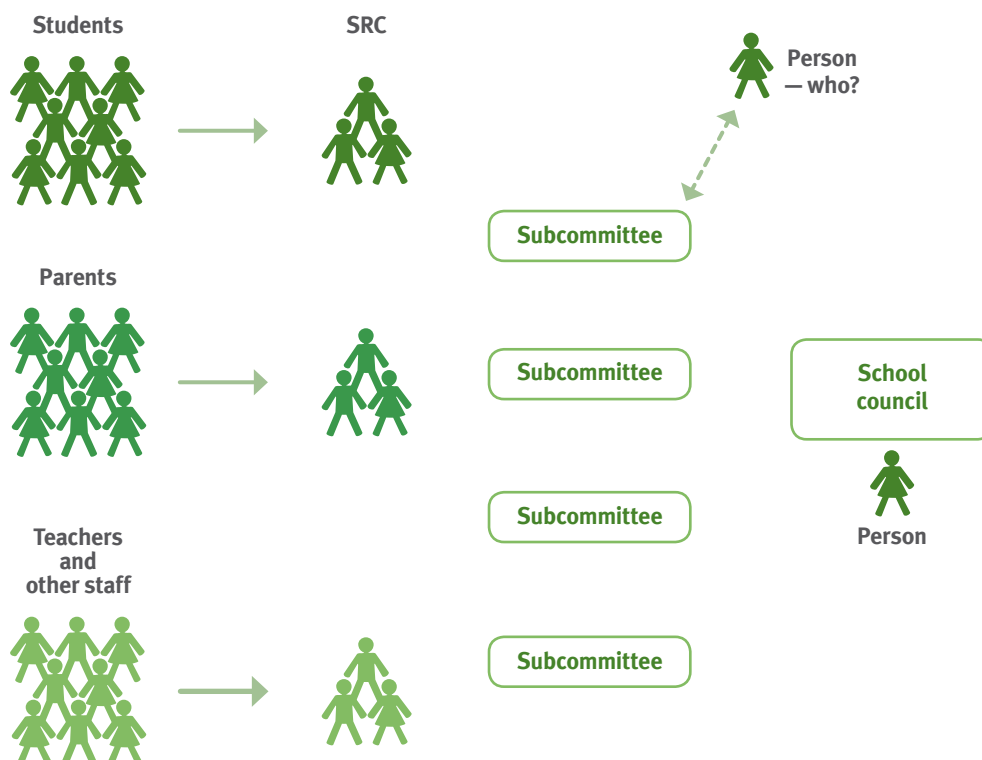
3.10 Links to the wider school community

Ever think you could use more support? Ever feel that, as a small group of students, you are taking on really big issues? This section will help you think about other groups in your community that you are linked to or you could join.

As you start your journey with the SRC, making links with the wider school community might not be your first priority. However, read this section quickly to get a general understanding of what community groups are out there and how they might be able to help. Then, if an opportunity arises, you will be prepared to take advantage of it.

Do students raise issues with the SRC that are 'outside the school'? These bigger issues might be very important to them, and also have implications for their lives within the school. The SRC can do something to address these issues, but it might need your help to investigate and act on them.

In both cases, here's how you might start, by looking at what groups and links exist.

In the last section we looked at how you can be working with other groups within the school. But students' issues don't stop at the school gate; SRCs often consider issues that the school can't address on its own. Thankfully, there are many groups who work with schools who might be able to help you. In fact, as the following diagram shows, the SRC has a responsibility to communicate with a wide range of groups on behalf of students:

Figure 3.2:
SRC's links to the wider school community
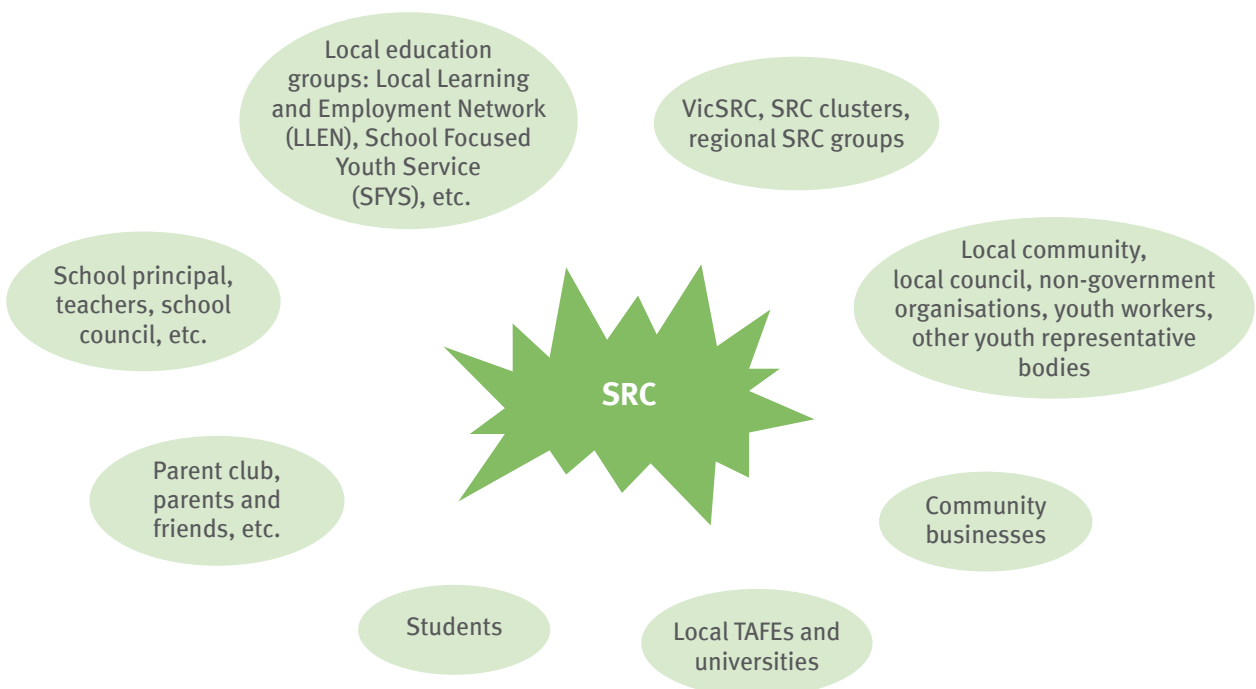
All of the groups shown in Figure 3.2 can help the SRC achieve its aims:

- Community or local government organisations can provide training to the SRC.
- Organisations and businesses can sponsor SRC activities.
- Local government or other organisations can provide space for SRC meetings and training outside the school.
- Many community organisations run education programs that are similar to the issues being discussed in your SRC; you might be able to get them to help you with your shared agendas.
- Local education groups such as the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and School Focused Youth Services (SFYS) can provide support and sometimes funding – they are also very interested to hear from SRCs and groups of SRCs that can advise them about students' needs.
- Individual parents and their clubs and organisations can assist with resources, supervision at training camps, transport and activities within the school.

When communicating with all of these groups, remember that they each have their own agenda – even the VicSRC. This is natural, but be upfront and ask 'What do you want to achieve?', 'How can our SRC help you with this?' and 'How can you support what the SRC is doing?'. Work out which groups have similar aims to you and work with them. Some of these groups (like the VicSRC) have a specific agenda about listening to students. This is an opportunity for you to shape community attitudes or even government policy.

Check section 4.1 for more ideas on resourcing the SRC and section 4.6 for information about the VicSRC.

Links with other SRCs

The SRC can also be linked with other student organisations, both locally through SRC clusters or regional groups (including Regional SRC Conferences), and statewide through the VicSRC.

The VicSRC has a Cluster Kit available online with more information about how your SRC can take part in or set up a local cluster of SRCs (see www.vicsrc.org.au). An SRC cluster is simply a local network – a group of students from secondary school SRCs who meet regularly to share information, to discuss common concerns and issues, to plan joint initiatives and to share resources. Clusters can be any size, though it's suggested that at least three schools need to be represented for a cluster to exist. Clusters should also meet regularly – it's suggested that at least once a term is useful, though this will depend on their location, purposes and the needs of its members.

Clusters are normally geographically based; that is, they are drawn from schools in the same area, where there are fairly easy travel possibilities. There are other possibilities, e.g. clusters can be linked by a common interest or characteristic; however, the shared nature of the cluster should be one that enables the SRCs to meet regularly.

Clusters provide important opportunities for students and their SRCs to meet and share information and support. Students have identified the need to network between SRCs and the VicSRC is establishing and supporting a cluster structure to enable this to happen. Clusters can feed directly into the VicSRC's decision-making processes through development of proposals to the **VicSRC Congress**, and reports to the **VicSRC Executive**.

Clusters exist so that SRCs can:

Learn together
• get ideas from each other
• support each other
• reflect together on their processes, successes and difficulties
• learn how to improve their operations
• develop skills in organisation, leadership and training
• develop efficient training.

Work together:
• gain information about other schools and about wider education policies
• learn about possibilities for student initiatives
• influence policy beyond individual schools
• enter into local partnerships in education decision-making
• provide student representation and voice on local networks, e.g. local councils, LLENs, etc.
• share resources
• enjoy the challenges and experiences ... and have fun!

eg GOOD PRACTICE

Members of SRCs in one area of Melbourne meet at least once a term for an afternoon as an SRC cluster. They use this time to tell each other what they have been working on, swap ideas and sometimes have planned joint activities between SRCs.

In a regional centre of Victoria, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development was developing a plan for coordinated education provision across the town: a mix of junior and senior secondary schools. The SRCs formed a local cluster so that they could hear about these plans, discuss them and give student input. They invited the regional director and consultants to attend to tell them what was happening and to hear students' responses.

In a country area of Victoria, the SRCs found it harder to meet face to face because of the distances involved. After attending a regional SRC conference, they set up a network of SRCs who communicate with each other using the internet and video conferencing.

4.1 Resourcing the SRC

What resources does your SRC need to function effectively?

The resources that an SRC has are not just practical and useful for your operation – they can also indicate the importance of the SRC within the school. For example, if the SRC has a budget, then it can plan to do things – but a budget also says that the school values the SRC by giving it funds to support its operation.

It's easy to think that the individual SRC members and the SRC meetings (students working together) are the only resources that the SRC has; in fact, there are existing resources that you can draw on at any time. You need to know what they are and how to best manage them.

Does your SRC have some great members but not enough money? Are you good at communicating within the SRC but not with the wider student body? What about physical resources? How many things belonging to the SRC can you hold in your hands? This section contains ideas for developing and managing your resource base.

Not all of the following ideas might be able to be provided by your school, but this section provides possibilities to help your discussions.

Human resources (people and support)
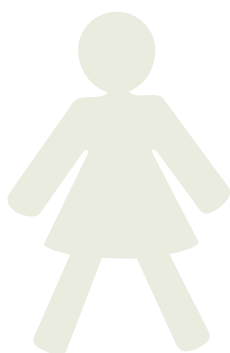
Your first and most important resources already exist within the SRC and the school: the human resources of committed representatives and an efficient SRC executive. This means that everyone on the SRC needs to have information about how the SRC functions, and everyone needs to know who has to do what and when: who is chairing meetings, who is writing the minutes, who is keeping financial records, who is distributing the SRC mail, etc.

The resources provided by a supportive student body, and from the principal and other staff members are also vital to the SRC's operation. Work actively on developing these; they are resources that don't cost any money!

As well as the human resources that exist within the members of the SRC, there should be an SRC support teacher – at least one. In a large school, or where your SRC has a complex structure, it would be valuable to have several teachers who support the SRC.

There is more information about this in sections 1.6 and 2.4.

Your second most important human resource is the time you all have: to discuss and decide issues, to report back to other students and get ideas from them, and to do the work that you take on. Developing this resource means making sure that you have a regular time to meet – and that everyone knows when this is – as well as a regular time for representatives to get together with their classes to report back to them and to get ideas.

Section 4.3: Credit and recognition contains ideas about getting and using that time.

Financial resources (a budget)

$

The SRC should have its own budget. If you know how much money the SRC has for the year, you can plan more accurately and carefully. We will explain how to manage SRC resources efficiently later in this section. You can make decisions about how much you can spend on SRC training or activities. It also means that you don't have to go to the school principal every time you decide you want to do something and ask for funding.

Where does this money come from? There are two possible sources: from the school's budget and/or from SRC fundraising.

If the school provides the SRC with a core budget each year, it indicates that the school regards the SRC in a similar way to other learning activities within the school. It establishes a budget line in the school accounts, with clear decisions about who can gain access to it and how.

The SRC could also allocate a percentage of what it raises during the year to support the operation of the SRC. This is most usefully done to support SRC training: students contribute to the effective operation of their own organisation.

Template T11: Finance planner will help you manage SRC finances (see Part 5).

eg GOOD PRACTICE

The school council allocates $5 per student at every year level to the SRC every year. This money is also allowed to roll over from year to year. In its budget, the SRC works out at the start of the year how much to allocate to areas such as training days, lunches for SRC meetings, folders for representatives, SRC conferences, membership of the VicSRC, photocopying and postage. Other allocations are made to charities, to gifts (e.g. for SRC convenors) and SRC projects within the school.

Physical resources (facilities)
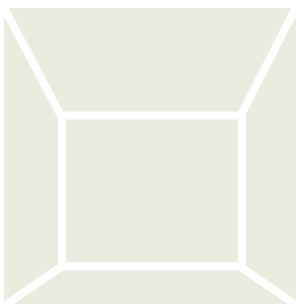
This area is most dependent on what the school can offer. But let's start with the possibility of an **SRC room**: a meeting room or office, where the SRC can be found (a physical presence in the school), where it can work, and where it can store its files and resources. In that room (or somewhere else), could be a lockable **SRC filing cabinet** – somewhere to keep the minute books, correspondence and records. If the SRC can't get a whole filing cabinet, at least a drawer in someone else's filing cabinet should be possible.

As well as this ongoing space, the SRC needs a **meeting room**. It helps if this is a regular space that can be set up in the best way for an effective meeting. At each meeting, there should be an **attendance list** available. All SRC members should have **folders,** in which they keep agendas, minutes and notes. The school could provide these, or the SRC could buy them each year from its budget.

It would also be very useful for the SRC to have its own **laptop,** for use before, during and after meetings: to prepare agendas and reports, keep minutes (as they happen) and to follow up correspondence. A digital camera would also be valuable to support SRC publicity and documentation. Of course, these valuable assets would need to be locked in the SRC filing cabinet when not in use.

Communication resources

How does information come to the SRC? Having an **SRC mail-slot** or pigeonhole in the school – perhaps in the front office – is a useful way to make sure that you get relevant material. But make sure you have someone who checks it regularly, and distributes mail within the SRC.

Having access to the **photocopier** is also invaluable. You can then copy agendas and minutes. The SRC might have its own access code, or a photocopier card, and a budgeted amount to spend.

The SRC can also have its own **website** (see **section 4.2**), or a section of the school's website. It could also have a regular column in the school's **newsletter.** Some schools have **video displays** of information, and the SRC can contribute information to these. In other schools, it's possible for an internal 'radio station' to be broadcast on the **PA system,** and the SRC can use this to communicate with students, as well as provide an enjoyable service.

Around the school, the SRC should have its own **noticeboard,** or space on other school boards, where information can be made available to students.

Publicity resources
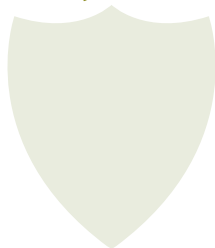
SRC badges identify SRC members, so that students know who to approach as their representatives. They can be presented at an induction ceremony so that members of the SRC are publicly acknowledged. Similarly, **photos** of SRC representatives can be displayed in the school to identify them and to send a strong statement to visitors about the importance of the SRC to the school.

Some schools might be able to provide space in the **school diary** for an SRC page, telling all students about what the SRC does and how it works – and how they can have their voices heard.

Training resources

SRC members need **training** support to carry out their jobs. This could mean going away on an SRC camp, or getting out of the school for a day session – or even just a half-day meeting. The costs of this training event, including venue hire, materials and (if appropriate) a facilitator or trainer, should be met by the school, or be included in the SRC budget. It might be useful to organise several such events at the start of the year and during the year, to plan and then to reflect on progress.

eg GOOD PRACTICE

The SRC organises training events for its members each year. It has a full day at the start of the year and a half-day each term, in addition to its regular SRC meetings. These training events are paid for out of the SRC's budget provided by the school. The budget is used to hire a venue, pay for lunch and employ a training facilitator to run the day.

Networking resources

A Cluster Kit is available from the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au).

Finally, the SRC should be resourced to network with other SRCs. This provides the SRC with ideas and support from students and SRCs in similar situations. Practically, that means financial support to attend conferences and meetings, and also for the SRC to become a member of the VicSRC and link with other students across the state. You can do this by attending regional SRC conferences and by attending, or even setting up, a cluster/network of SRCs in your local area.

How to go about getting SRC resources

Who can provide these resources for the SRC?

The first place to check is with the school council. You will need to write a proposal, giving details of what resources you need (or what funding you need to buy these resources), why you need them, and how much they will cost. The SRC support teacher can help you write this proposal.

You might also be able to apply for grants from other bodies. For example, the School Focused Youth Services program in your area could have funds available. Ask the school for their contact, and get a copy of their guidelines and timetable, or download these from their website (see www.sfys.infoxchange.net.au). You will again need to write a proposal showing how you meet their objectives and saying what you want funds for. Other similar possibilities include Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) (see www.llen.vic.gov.au), or your local council's youth services.

Find out when proposals need to be submitted and who will make the decision. If possible, see if you can meet with the group to present your case and explain why you need support.

If you are given funds or other resources, remember that you need to be accountable for their use. You have to use these resources for what you said you'd use them for, and you will need to report the outcomes of the funding, i.e. what was achieved.

Finally, if resources are not available from any of these sources, the SRC might need to raise its own funds for its operation. A proportion of any fundraising activities could be put aside for the SRC – but make this very clear to the students you represent, and explain how their contributions help you to be better representatives for them.

Template T10: SRC resources provides a checklist for you to think about resources and assess what you have and what you need to get (see Part 5).

Using template T10: SRC resources

This template is available In Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template as a checklist to assess the SRC resources that you have and need. Discuss this at an SRC meeting and tick off in the first column what you already have.

Then in the second column discuss what you need. You could tick the items you think you need, or you could mark these in priority order: what do you think is the most important resource that you need – and what is most possible to get?

Finally, add in some ideas about where you might get these resources from. Who do you need to approach? Why do you need this? Who will ask?

Managing the SRC's financial resources

When the SRC manages to get a budget, this has to be managed and accounted for. This section gives some information about how this can happen.

Who?

While it's the role of the SRC treasurer to keep track of the SRC accounts, you can ask for help from the school's business manager or bursar. The SRC account or budget will probably be part of the school's accounts and therefore reports should be available through the school's accounting system.

The treasurer still needs to keep a financial summary, and all members of the SRC should have an overall understanding of what is happening. This means the SRC should know about its:

- **Income:** how much money the SRC is getting, where this comes from, and what it was obtained for and, in particular, whether there are any restrictions on what it can be used for
- **Expenditure:** how much money the SRC has spent so far, what it has been spent on, and what money is committed (decisions already made about spending it)
- **Balance:** the amount that is still available at any time.

The treasurer should be able to produce a balance sheet for SRC meetings, particularly if decisions are going to be made about spending money. The SRC meeting should be able to ask the treasurer 'Can we afford this?' and get an accurate answer.

If the SRC has a separate account, it might also be possible for the treasurer to be the person who signs cheques on behalf of the SRC, though the school will probably require that its business manager also countersigns these. The SRC treasurer is responsible for making sure that what is spent is in line with what the SRC decides.

If the SRC is to spend money on large items, this will probably have to be done through the school's order system. Someone will have to fill out a school order and ask the school office to send it to the company involved.

For small items (e.g. stationery) the school might allow members of the SRC to buy these and get the money back from the school (through 'petty cash'). You will need to keep receipts. Check with your school's business manager about the rules and processes for this.

Template T11: Finance planner can help with this (see Part 5).

Budget

The decisions that the SRC makes about spending money need to happen within a plan of what the SRC wants to do.

The SRC's budget is its plan for using its money. In this way, the SRC can match what it spends its money on to its priorities. In the forward planning for the year ahead, money should be allocated to each of its initiatives. You can make a rough guess as to what initiatives cost and, as you get more experience in this, these estimates will become more accurate.

As you find out what you really spent on an initiative, you can update your budget. But remember that you still have the same amount available, so if you overspend on one thing, you will have to decrease your planned spending on other areas.

In your budget, you might also want to plan to leave some money in your account at the end of the year to pass on to the next SRC, or to allow for some special need or event. But make sure that you can keep this for the SRC and not have it absorbed into general school funds – your school might have different financial rules about this.

The SRC budget should be presented to the SRC for approval so that all members know what the financial plans are. The treasurer can again get support from the SRC support teacher and the school's business manager to prepare the budget.

eg Good Practice

The treasurer works with the SRC support teacher and the school business manager at the start of the year to plan an overall budget for the SRC. This shows all the expected income and allocates amounts to areas where the SRC expects to spend money.

The SRC treasurer presents this budget plan to the SRC for approval. Each month, the treasurer reports how the SRC's income and expenditure compare with the budget plan. If necessary, the SRC then can adjust its budget plan to meet any changing priorities.

Using template T11: Finance planner

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

The person in charge of the SRC budget can use this template to help keep track of the SRC finances. It can be used to summarise income and expenditure (perhaps each month) and make reports to each SRC meeting about the balance of the account.

The template has columns for recording money that comes to the SRC, and money that the SRC spends. Keep adding rows to the table if you need them. At the bottom of the table are totals for all money received and all money spent, and the final balance of the account.

You need to add in any other income that you know the SRC is yet to receive, and any financial commitments made, so that you finish up with a statement about the total funds available to the SRC.

If you have used spreadsheets, in an Excel program for example, it's easy to make one that replaces this table and automatically updates totals whenever you add in amounts that you receive or spend.

4.2 Using technology effectively

There are many technologies your SRC can use to make your work more effective, but keep in mind that this area is developing rapidly and that new technologies are emerging all the time. Technological resources already within the school can be used by the SRC to its advantage. This section provides a few ideas about how the SRC can use technology effectively.[3]

Using technology for SRC communication

Communication between SRC members and others is vital to the success of all SRCs. Communication technologies can be used by all members of the SRC to keep in touch and coordinate its work. You can use:

- **Email and mailing lists:** Most schools provide students with an email address. Your SRC can easily send out meeting reminders, calls for agenda items, meeting agendas and minutes through email. But it's important that all SRC members regularly check their email for updates, both on their school address, and on personal addresses. To help with discussions, set up an emailing list. This enables messages and replies to be sent to all members of the group. It's an effective way to encourage conversations and discussions through email.

- **Forums:** Forums can be used for SRC announcements, polls, discussions and personal messaging. On a forum, you can hold discussions between your SRC members. You can also hold discussions that are open to all members of the student body. Many forums allow you to control who can contribute to certain 'threads' (topics) of messages; you can show some topics to everyone and some only to voting members of the SRC. Try out FreeForums (www.freeforums.org) or ForumUp (www.forumup.org).

- **Blogs:** Short for 'weblog', a blog is a type of online journal. It can be updated by one or more members of your SRC; you can give access to all members to share ideas. Blogs are best used for reports and announcements of meetings rather than discussions. Create a free blog for your SRC with common blogging tools, such as Global Teacher (globalteacher.org.au) or NING (www.ning.com). (Note: there is a cost involved for NING).

- **Wikis:** A 'wiki' is a collaborative website that can be edited by anyone (think Wikipedia). You could restrict access to those in your SRC and use a wiki as a place to store your meeting minutes, agendas, reports and even hold discussions. Free wikis can be created with Wikispaces for Teachers (www.wikispaces.com/site/for/teachers). (Note: this is ad free).

Using technology for SRC networking

SRCs can share information and ideas between schools in local and regional networks. While there's nothing as exciting or inspiring as meeting other students face to face, large distances and busy school schedules often limit opportunities for SRC members from different schools to get together. Communication technologies make other forms of meeting possible. Some schools may be able to use internet-based software such as Skype to provide both voice and video connection between schools. If Skype is not available at your school, speak to your principal. Your school might also have videoconferencing facilities, so you can meet up 'virtually' with other schools' SRCs on a regular basis. You can also use the Virtual Conference Centre set up by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD).

eg

Virtual Conference Centre

DEECD manages this web conferencing facility that both teachers and students are able to book for meetings or presentations. SRCs can use this facility to run a meeting connecting hundreds of students from schools across Victoria. Smaller groups can also book a space for discussions around a specific issue or idea.

The web conferencing tool allows students to run presentations, have discussions, vote, share files and resources, provide audio responses and take part in online activities on a 'virtual whiteboard' in "Realtime". It is available to both government and non-government schools. For more information or to make a booking, visit: (www.education.vic.gov.au/researchinnovation/virtualconferencecentre).

ultranet

The Ultranet

The Ultranet has arrived in all Victorian government schools, with students progressively coming onto the system during 2010. The Ultranet is a state-wide, secure website that teachers, students and parents can access via the internet. SRCs can use the Ultranet to create community spaces and build in communication applications like blogs and wikis, sharing information efficiently within and across Victorian government schools.

Using technology for SRC promotion

Students spend large amounts of time on the Internet – not only studying and researching for schoolwork, but also socialising and having fun in their down time. This can be used to the SRC's advantage: make yourself known through the sites that other students use!

- **Social networks:** Students are often members of one or more social networking websites. However it is generally a good idea to keep SRC communication separate from your own social spaces. As mentioned on the previous page, you can develop a communication space for your SRC using blogging tools such as Global Teacher and NING. These spaces allow you to share information and control who can view, comment and contribute to the space. It can be challenging to use social networking tools for "business" but it is a great way to connect with people. These online spaces need leadership and purpose – make sure that SRC members know about these spaces and how they should be used.

- **Websites:** Having your own SRC website is a great way to promote your SRC. To create an effective website, it should be designed by someone with experience in doing so (e.g. in Microsoft FrontPage or Macromedia Dreamweaver). One of your SRC members might give it a go, or you could commission some other students to design and develop the site (perhaps as part of their curriculum). Once you've designed your SRC website, it needs to be hosted on the internet. To register a formal URL for the website and find out how to have it hosted on the Edustar ISP service, see: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/elearningsupportservices/www/manage/webhosting.htm.
  You will need to ask your principal for endorsement.

Using technology to carry out surveys

Your SRC might want to survey students about issues, priorities, ideas, etc. Instead of handing out a paper survey, you can use an online survey tool. These are easy to use and engaging for students to complete. You can construct a survey online, then email the link to all or selected students. They then complete the survey online and the results are compiled and often graphed for you. You can include tick-the-box items or written responses.

Some commonly used free online survey tools are Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com), Survey Gizmo (www.surveygizmo.com), Zoomerang (www.zoomerang.com) and QuestionPro (www.questionpro.com). The free tools often limit the number of questions you can ask, the number of responses you can accept, or the numbers of surveys you can be doing – or you can pay to upgrade.

WARNING! Just remember that you need to let people know where their information is going to go and always ask permission when uploading people's images or ideas. If there are any issues, it is best to remove any comments, pages or even the space until they are resolved. You can always ask for help from your SRC support teacher. Once you have an official SRC space, it is important that SRC members represent the SRC and their school in a positive way. For ideas on safe and responsible use of these spaces, see www.education.vic.gov.au/cybersafety. It is also very important to plan the closure of any spaces or sites you manage when they are no longer being used. Nothing good ever happens to unmanaged online space.

Using technology during meetings

Schools now have access to resources such as interactive whiteboards. The SRC can use these tools during meetings to make presentations on issues, projects or budgets or as an organising tool. Whenever you're addressing the SRC, a visual aid can be of assistance. These can also be used to impress the principal or school council with your professionalism when you're proposing a new project. Good-looking presentations are easy to create using Microsoft PowerPoint – a common software package on most school computers, both Mac and PC. Digital stories can also present issues powerfully.

Figure 4.1:
A sample SRC digital presentation

Proposal:
Toilet Upgrades
SRC President
18/08/2010

Make sure that the style of these presentations does not accidentally exclude other SRC members from being able to contribute to planning a project. A 'slick' presentation of an idea can look like it's completed rather than a proposed idea, so build in ways for the SRC meeting to adapt and change the PowerPoint presentation.

It's also a good idea to have a laptop (or two!) at your meetings, particularly for an easy display of your agenda, or for your secretary to use to take meeting minutes. Typing these minutes up during the meeting saves time, and means that they can be distributed sooner, along with an action summary of your decisions. However, it's still important to back up all of your information. You should print and keep a hard copy somewhere safe (like a filing cabinet) – electronic technologies are not completely fail-safe.

The VicSRC website has electronic templates of an agenda, a minutes sheet and an action summary, which you can save on the SRC laptop and use for meetings and planning (see Part 5).
If no one on the SRC owns their own laptop, consider investing in one specifically for the SRC.

eg GOOD PRACTICE {

The school buys a laptop for the use of the SRC. This is used for meeting agendas and minutes, for reports and for SRC research. It's kept secure in the SRC room.

WARNING! Just because it's available, access to new technology doesn't mean students will use it! It's easy to fall into the trap of thinking that, because it's online, everyone will pay attention. The reality is that the online environment is as competitive as the real world – it's just another way to compete for everybody's attention. For example, just because a survey is online, there's no guarantee that more students will fill it out. Try several different approaches. You may get more responses on paper by approaching students face to face during lunchtime or by getting some class time for students to complete it. Having a website means you need to update it regularly, otherwise students will stop visiting it. Forums and blogs require quite a bit of active participation to become dynamic and interesting.

These technologies can be used by SRCs in many different ways. It's important for SRCs to adopt the technologies available to them and use them to support the SRC. We are also constantly learning how to use new technologies as they emerge, so it's important that we continue to share information and advice about how this can be done. The VicSRC is interested to hear about your experiences and to let other SRCs know what you are discovering.

4.3 Credit and recognition

Have you ever felt like you do a lot of important work for the SRC but don't get credit for it?

Because the SRC involves learning by students, this learning should be recognised by the school and be seen as part of its planned curriculum. This section provides some ideas for how you might implement this.

You might be thrilled to be on the SRC but, like any job, keeping your motivation going over time requires appreciation and support. Here are some ideas about promoting ways that students, teachers, principals and parents can reward you for your hard work – and give you time to do it. SRCs are sometimes undervalued – don't get taken for granted!

Are you feeling burnt out? Or maybe you've seen other students get burnt out and leave the SRC – or not have time to complete the work that they set out to do? Are you worried that the VCE could reduce your time to work on your SRC interests? Maybe you need to campaign for the SRC to be recognised and for your work to be built into the curriculum.

Needs

Students on SRCs need time to read papers, consult with other students, talk with other members, write proposals, research issues, etc. They also need time to attend meetings (of the SRC and other groups) that could be during class time, at recess or out-of-school hours, and to follow up by writing reports and reporting back to the SRC and others.

Such time is often limited and SRC work must compete with class work, homework, sport, part-time jobs and other demands. Some students find that, as school work becomes more demanding, their SRC involvement becomes limited or threatened.

Getting proper **credit** and **recognition** means that students on the SRC (and related bodies) are not penalised for missing classes to attend meetings or to work for the SRC. The SRC should not be an extra, unrecognised burden.

This is also an issue of equity, because pressures can affect some students more than others. Credit is important to enable all students to be representatives, not just those who can 'afford the time'.

How schools can provide credit and recognition

Schools need to find ways to provide SRC representatives with both the time and recognition for their work. When we think about what is needed, it's important to distinguish between the public recognition provided for the SRC and its members by the school, and the academic credit that can enable students to have time to do SRC work.
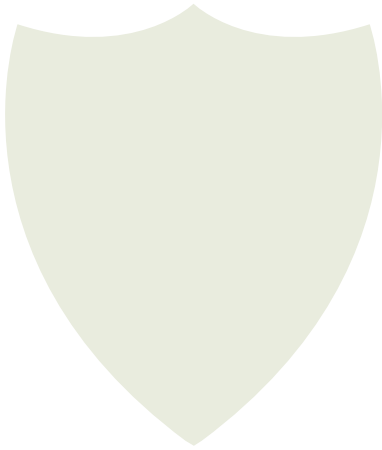
Recognition of the SRC by the school

Recognition can be achieved by publicly acknowledging the SRC at assemblies and in newsletters, or by providing SRC members with certificates or references. The school can also recognise the SRC through awards, badges, special jumpers or access to specific benefits associated with the SRC work, such as lunches. These actions say 'You're doing a good job – and you're doing this officially'.

Academic credit

Providing **credit** recognises the skills gained by SRC members. This can be in a personal reference or as part of the school's assessment processes. It communicates 'You've learned specific things' and 'You've completed work requirements'.

One way to do this is to have a system of 'negotiated exemptions' and 'negotiated replacements' within appropriate subjects: work requirements that don't need to be done, or work requirements from the SRC that replace other class work. Credit for work on the SRC is then part of the regular recognition that the school gives to students' achievements.

Time for the SRC's work

If a school gives SRC members time to do their work and includes this as part of their learning, this action says 'These are important things that involve important learning – and that take time; you have formal time within your school commitments to do them'.

Good Practice { The school provides all SRC members with references about their work. It also includes comments in the school's assessment. It supports students and teachers to negotiate the arrangements through which time and credit can be given to students for their SRC work, as part of the curriculum.

How credit can be arranged

The way that your school provides credit for members of the SRC will depend on the school's curriculum. Here are some possibilities:

- A **separate subject, e.g. an elective:** All members of the SRC (and other committees) could be enrolled in a subject (e.g. 'Government') and a teacher also allocated time for this. This could be timetabled, or it could exist more flexibly as a non-timetabled subject with one-to-one or small group meetings with the support teacher. This subject could be part of an 'Extension Studies' block, allowing for other activities to be recognised.
- An **existing subject sets up an SRC project:** Students use an appropriate subject (e.g. Politics) to set up an SRC as part of their studies.
- An **existing subject recognises the work of individuals:** The teacher of a subject (e.g. English) could accept work done for meetings (minutes, reports, etc.) as equivalent to essays and assignments. Some lessons might be compulsory for attendance; others would enable replacement work to be done.

Can SRC work link to the VELS?

SRCs provide authentic learning experiences in active citizenship. Student outcomes from involvement in SRCs can be measured against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS).

The Physical, Personal and Social Learning strand of the VELS clearly advocates the benefits of students taking greater responsibility for their

learning and active participation in school life. In particular, the Personal Learning and Civics and Citizenship Education domains focus on the knowledge, skills and attributes for productive and active citizenship.

Schools are one of the few places where young people can learn and rehearse the skills of citizenship. Research indicates that where students are at the centre of learning design and where the pedagogies involve real life learning, there are observable changes for the student, the teacher and the school. These include students who are empowered, engaged, more responsible, confident and positive about their place in the school and the wider community[4].

Student representation and student voice are fundamental attributes of good curriculum design. There are clear standards in the VELS (from Level 3 onwards) that reflect the type of opportunities and pedagogy that can promote student representation.

What SRC representatives need to do

Attendance at an SRC meeting is not enough to get credit (just as attendance in class is not enough). SRC representatives and teachers should agree on what skills and content need to be recognised, and therefore on what the student needs to produce – i.e. what evidence should be presented – in order for a student to receive credit for SRC work. This could include presenting meeting minutes that record the student's contribution, written reports by the student, published reports in school or community newsletters, recorded speeches or interviews, or summary reports.

The student should keep a diary that summarises dates and purposes of meetings, details about their role in meetings and personal reactions and reflections. This diary can also be a source for self-assessment.

Arrangements for receiving credit need to be negotiated and arranged in advance, so that everyone is clear on what needs to be done and what has been agreed.

Overseeing credit

While the production of evidence and a student's self-assessment could be part of the process for providing credit, the school will probably also need some form of 'verification'. Who can do this?

A subject teacher could keep a record of the work produced, and include a summary in the subject's assessment or the SRC support teacher could formally note achievement of goals and write a special assessment. It could also be done by someone else who knows the SRC representative's work; such as the principal, the school's student wellbeing coordinator, a parent or consultant. A mixture of these approaches could also be used.

eg **GOOD PRACTICE** {

It is school policy to recognise a range of ways that students can show what they are learning. The SRC is one possibility where the work that students do is recognised as part of the curriculum. Students and teachers are supported to negotiate ways that this can happen in different subjects, or by setting up new subjects. In many areas, students can substitute SRC work for the equivalent assignments and work requirements of their subjects, and be assessed on this.

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[4] **At the Heart of What We Do: Values Education at the Centre of Schooling -**
The Final Report of the Values Education Good Practice Schools Project Stage 2, Department of Education,
Employment and Workplace Relations, Curriculum Corporation, 2008.

Credit checklist

For each member of the SRC:

- ☐ time is provided
- ☐ skill and knowledge objectives are specified
- ☐ work requirements are specified
- ☐ supervision is provided
- ☐ formal assessment is provided
- ☐ training opportunities are provided
- ☐ training is undertaken.

Ideas for recognition

For each member of the SRC:

- ☐ acknowledgment (e.g. at assemblies) is given
- ☐ an SRC badge is provided
- ☐ a certificate is provided
- ☐ a reference is provided
- ☐ an award is provided
- ☐ special benefits, e.g. lunches are provided
- ☐ articles are published in newsletters, etc.

4.4 Solving problems and dealing with conflict

Solving problems

Problems or unforeseen issues will almost certainly come up in your SRC, or within the SRC group. No matter how well you plan, situations can change or difficulties arise. Part of your challenge is being ready to deal with these problems in a creative way, rather than letting them get in the way of the success of the SRC. Some of these problems could be very small and easily worked out, but others might need a bit more work.

There is usually more than one way to deal with a problem. Work out different ways (i.e. **options**), then choose which seems the best. You then have some other approaches to try if the first solution doesn't work. Sometimes it takes a couple of attempts to get it right.

In this section are some ideas that you can use, and steps you can follow, to face up to and solve problems. These can be used by the SRC when brainstorming as a group. Individuals can also use these ideas to solve problems within their own areas of responsibility.

Steps

1. **Describe the problem:** Think about the issues involved. Try to sort out the facts rather than let emotions get in the way. If the problem seems too large to deal with, break it down into smaller issues so you can deal with one at a time

2. **Describe what you want to happen:** Be clear about the outcome you want. What areas might you be able to compromise on?

3. **Work out who can help:** No one has to deal with any problem alone. Think of people who can help if times get tough: friends, family, mentor, support teachers, coaches – any trustworthy person. Sometimes, you might need to look for help from professionals or others. Who would be the most appropriate person to take your problems to?

4. **Work out what might help:** Think about as many possible solutions or options as you can without worrying yet about what might work and what might not.

5. **Choose what might work:** Once you've got a few possibilities, sort through them to find the best one. Decide on (say) four possibilities and think through how you might make them happen. One or two might seem best, but others might be possible too.

6. **Try it out:** Talk an approach over with others and think about all the little things you will need to do to make it happen. Small steps are best. When you've tried it, think about how it went. If your first solution doesn't work, try another. Don't be disheartened if it takes a few attempts to get it right and move towards solving your problem.

Template T12: Solving problems will help you work through these steps (see Part 5).

eg *The POOCH Method*

An approach that some SRCs and schools have used is called the POOCH method, which stands for problem, outcomes, options, choice and how. It provides a checklist of five steps in problem-solving that are similar to the approach outlined on the next page:

1. Define the *p*roblem

2. Look at the *o*utcomes you want

3. List the *o*ptions

4. Make your *c*hoice

5. Try it, then check *h*ow it went.

Figure 4.2:
Problem-solving technique

What's the problem?
- Define it
- Use active listening skills to help (prompts and open-ended questions)

What do we want to happen?
Define outcomes and possible compromises

Who might help?
Who is the most appropriate person?

What might help?
Brainstorm possible solutions

What have we already tried?
What strategies have been tried in the past?

What else could we try?
Generate possible options: 'How would it be if ... ?', or 'Could we ... ?'

Choose
Pick the best option

How could this work?
- Practical details of the option
- Advantages and disadvantages
- Consequences

Try it out
Work through smaller steps

Get support

No

Evaluate: How did it go?
Is the problem managed or solved?

Yes

Positive outcome — problem managed or solved

This template is available in Part 5 of this kit and on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au). It can be downloaded onto your SRC laptop and used in your SRC meetings.

Use this template to help you plan how to solve problems. Record your ideas as you follow the simple four-step process for solving problems presented in the template.

1 ➤ ***Define the problem:***
  - what is happening?
  - what do you want to happen**?**

2 ➤ ***Identify people who can help***

3 ➤ ***Think of some possible solutions (i.e. options) that might help***

4 ➤ ***Choose something and try it out; check what happens.***

TIP: Make sure you have several possible solutions or options available in case your first idea doesn't work well.

Dealing with conflict

Conflict is a normal and healthy part of working in groups; it's how we handle it that can be tricky. We can either let it get out of control or we can use it productively to generate new ideas and enthusiasm.

Don't have conflict in your SRC? That could be a problem too …
The Groupwork Institute of Australia defines conflict as 'a difference of opinion with strong feelings attached'. What is an SRC without differences of opinion and strong feelings? If you don't have any conflict in your SRC, it might be a sign that not all views are being represented or that not everyone feels safe enough to express their views.

Expressing opinions and feelings is an important reason for having an SRC. The challenge for individuals can be learning how to directly express strong feelings without the situation becoming overheated. The challenge for groups is creating a space where everyone feels able to speak honestly. This involves everyone being able to listen and reflect on the strong opinions and feelings of others.

When a conflict becomes overheated

This will probably happen sometime during the life of your SRC. When it does, here are a few things you can do:

1. Recognise that a conflict is taking place. Simply pointing out what is happening can help people just to pause, cool down a little and think about a process for dealing with conflict.

2. Reaffirm your group agreements from the start of the year. Hopefully, this includes things like respecting other people's opinions and listening to others. Ask the group if they can handle the situation respectfully now or whether they would prefer to come back to it when people have cooled down. The point here is that you want everyone to feel safe in expressing their views and their feelings.

3. Point out that everyone in the group is affected by the situation and has a role to play. There are no innocent bystanders in a conflict situation. Even if you don't have a view on the issue, you still have a role in making sure that everyone is heard. You may also be able to offer a creative solution that those caught up in the conflict can't see. This is especially true for those who have positions of power in the room. Other people look to you for leadership, so it's important that you lead in listening and being constructive.

4. Make sure that there is a neutral chairperson or mediator. If you are chairing a meeting and there's a conflict that you have concerns about, then probably the best thing to do is to temporarily step down from the role of chair and participate fully in the discussion. If the mediator is not neutral, then it's likely that one side won't feel properly heard and the conflict will be much more difficult to resolve.

5. Once you've done these things you should be ready to discuss what the conflict is about. Each party should be given an opportunity to fully express what they think the problem is and how it makes them feel:

   - Try to focus on what is actually happening in the situation and how different people are affected by it.
   - Ask participants not to suggest solutions at this point; you can hear these after you've heard all perspectives on the problem.
   - Ask each participant to be honest and to take responsibility for their part in the conflict.
   - Be assertive, not aggressive. An aggressive approach attacks the other person and turns the problem into an 'I win/you lose' situation. An assertive approach clearly states your own views and feelings, but in a way that also values the opinions of others.
   - Try to identify and record the issues as they are raised. If it's a big and complex conflict situation, it might take a long time to hear from everyone. In that case it can be a good idea to take a break (even a very short one) at this point so that students can clear their minds or digest the different points of view.

The next step is to work through the issues raised. Try and prioritise these, starting with the most important. Use the problem-solving approach suggested in Figure 4.2 (see page 135) in this section to list a range of possible solutions before deciding on the best solution for the whole group.

Conflict can be difficult, both personally and for the group. If you have tried as much as you can and don't feel you are getting anywhere, talk with others you trust about ways to deal with the conflict. You might even need to find a professional facilitator to help you work through the situation. On the other hand, successfully resolving a conflict (with or without outside help) can be tremendously empowering for your SRC. Working through difficult times can be a great bonding experience and often gives you a new and deeper appreciation of each other. So remember that conflict is normal and healthy – it's what you do with it that counts.

Who can you talk with?

There are various people in the school you can talk with, and who can help you solve problems or deal with conflict. The SRC support teacher is probably the first person to consult. The school's student wellbeing coordinator or counsellor could also be available. Your year-level coordinator or subschool coordinator could be appropriate too.

If there's no one within the school who can support you, your local council's youth services or a local health service might have someone with relevant training and experience who can advise and support you.

If the conflict involves the whole SRC, you might be able to turn to your school council, parent association or club. While the VicSRC can provide advice, there is a limit to what can be offered at a state level, and the best solutions will be ones that you develop locally.

4.5 Tools for SRC decision-making

Here are some tools that you can use when you are making decisions. These are particularly useful for generating ideas and working out priorities.

Brainstorming

Brainstorming is one easy way of getting ideas. It's particularly useful when a group is stuck for ideas. The aim is to collect as many ideas as you can about a topic. You can do this as a whole SRC, but sometimes it's better to divide into smaller groups and hear more voices and ideas.

Write the question up clearly and simply in front of the group, e.g. '*What's the major task for the SRC this term?*'. Appoint a recorder and a chairperson for each group (or the groups can appoint their own).

The rules of brainstorming are simple. Every idea put forward is written down. There is no discussion about whether an idea is good or bad – no judgments are made – and you don't have to explain yourself.

At the end, you can collect all the ideas together (perhaps on the board), group the ones that are the same or similar, and then ask the group to decide on each or to put them in order of importance. A simple vote ('vote for the three best ideas') or an Agree/Disagree/Unclear approach (see page 140) are ways of doing this.

1:2:4

Write a question on the board in front of the group. Ask each person to write down (privately) their top three suggestions or ideas in response to this. Then pair people up to swap their lists. Each pair then has to reach agreement on (say) four suggestions. Then double up the groups into fours – and each of these groups has to reach agreement on (say) five suggestions. Keep going until the whole group reaches agreement. Or stop at some point, ask the groups to report their lists and write these on the board (no duplicates allowed), and perhaps vote for the most important ones. The numbers aren't important – you can go 1:3:9 for example, or take four suggestions – but the idea is to make each small group reach an agreement on their priority.

Nominal group technique (NGT)

Individual members privately write down ideas in response to a question. The ideas are then collated: one idea from each student, in rotation, without repetition. These ideas are noted on the board. No debate or discussion is allowed. If individuals have no new ideas, they pass, until all ideas are on the board.

Anyone can then ask for any idea to be clarified. If needed, ideas can be amended slightly to make them clearer. Similar statements are then combined, with the agreement of those proposing them.

Everyone then votes by secret ballot for the most important ideas – each can have one, two or three votes as the chairperson decides. The number of votes for each item is recorded and this results in a list in order of importance to the group.

Agree/Disagree/Unclear (ADU)

Every person writes down three ideas, with each one written in large words on a separate piece of paper. The ideas are all pinned to the wall in front of the group under the heading AGREE. Two other headings – DISAGREE and UNCLEAR – are also put on the wall. Anyone can shift a piece of paper along the wall to DISAGREE or UNCLEAR, but no one can move it back again yet.

After everyone has had a chance to shift the ideas around, the ones under UNCLEAR are sorted out: What isn't clear? How could it be written to make it clear? Once each idea is clear, it's shifted to either AGREE or DISAGREE. The ones under DISAGREE can then be debated, but perhaps it's better to concentrate first on the ones under AGREE and work out how to do them.

XYZ

Write the question or issue on the board in front of the group. Give each person three pieces of paper, labelled X, Y and Z. Ask them to work in pairs to think of three solutions or answers or actions:

1. X is something that could be done straight away to address the issue
2. Y is something that will take longer, but could be done this year
3. Z is a weird idea that would address the issue. And, while it might not be possible in this life, it could prompt other feasible ideas.

Post all the ideas up on the wall and then use one of the other techniques to evaluate and prioritise them.

? Decision-making maze

The decision-making maze is a helpful way of weighing up options and 'what-ifs?' and guiding you to a solution.

Situation	*You could* (options)	*What would happen if you did this* (consequences)?	*Solution*

4.6 The VicSRC

The Victorian Student Representative Council (VicSRC) is a statewide organisation of secondary school students. It links and represents student representative councils (SRCs) — and similar student organisations — in Victorian secondary schools in all education systems. It's run by secondary school students, for secondary school students. It has been in existence since 2001.

What are the aims of the VicSRC?

The VicSRC aims to strengthen SRCs in schools and increase their effectiveness. It also aims to be a representative body for Victorian secondary school students, which speaks on behalf of students to the government, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, the Catholic Education Office, Independent Schools Victoria and other bodies. *(See below for more details of these aims.)*

What does the VicSRC do?

The VicSRC assists SRCs to work together and share resources. It responds to requests from the government and other bodies for student views on education issues. It discusses and debates topics, develops resources, and runs conferences. It publishes four newsletters each year and provides information on its website.

Who can join the VicSRC? How?

Individual SRCs can join the VicSRC. For an annual membership fee, SRCs who are members receive a pack of benefits, including regular information about SRCs, discounts to training and other events, and advice and support. There's a membership form on the VicSRC website.

What's the VicSRC's structure?

Individual SRCs join the VicSRC; they are then linked into local clusters. An annual VicSRC Congress sets directions for the next year, and also elects a VicSRC Student Executive that is responsible for acting on these decisions.

What are Clusters?

Clusters are simply local groups or networks of SRCs that wish to work together in their local area. There's more detail about them in a Cluster Kit available on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au).

What is Congress?

Each year, the VicSRC has a big statewide conference called "Congress". Usually two students from each school can attend (you don't have to be a member of the VicSRC to attend). There are discussions and debates on issues that students bring to it and a formal session where decisions are made on behalf of the VicSRC. These decisions set the directions for the work of the VicSRC for the next year. A Student Executive is also elected by students at the Congress.

Where can I find out more information?
Check the VicSRC website at: www.vicsrc.org.au or email the VicSRC Coordinator at: coordinator@vicsrc.org.au

What is the Student Executive?

The VicSRC Student Executive consists of up to 20 students from across the state, elected by students at the VicSRC Congress. Any student from Years 7 to 11 can stand for election. The Executive meets about 10 to 12 times a year, usually at weekends, and has responsibility for taking action on issues decided at Congress.

How can I get involved?

You can be involved at your school, in an SRC cluster or at a statewide level. In your school you can be active on your SRC as the liaison person for the VicSRC. You can set up and be active in a local cluster. You can come to the VicSRC Congress and other conferences and stand for the Executive. You don't have to be on your SRC to be active in the VicSRC, but you must keep linked in with your school's SRC.

Who supports the VicSRC?

The VicSRC receives funding from the Coordination and Strategy Division, Office for Government School Education of the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, through the auspices of the Youth Affairs Council of Victoria (YACVic). There is also a VicSRC supporters group made up of individuals and organisations.

VicSRC's vision

We want an education system where learning is enjoyable, practical and meaningful and where SRCs are valued and supported to contribute to making this an ongoing reality.

We want a VicSRC that fosters connections between SRCs and is recognised as the peak body for secondary students in Victoria.

The VicSRC's work is based on these principles:

- Student run, organised and initiated
- For the benefit of students
- Inclusive
- Not party political
- Not for profit
- Undertaking investigative representation.

Victorian Student
Representative Council

Aims of the VicSRC

To strengthen SRCs:

- By improving the operation of student representative bodies within secondary schools in Victoria
- By supporting networks between schools at a local level
- By increasing the profile of student representative bodies in the community.

To be a representative body for Victorian secondary school students:

- By providing a network linking students and student representative bodies across Victoria
- By providing a recognised and student-based structure to speak on behalf of secondary students.

To facilitate and coordinate action by secondary students at all levels:

- By supporting projects, initiatives, and any related activities that secondary students could participate in, and which would be more effective on a larger scale
- By coordinating appropriate activities at a statewide level.

To be democratic and participatory:

- By encouraging students to understand, practise and experience democracy, by being included in decision-making at all levels.

T1   SRC constitution

T2   Group agreement

T3   Brainstorm of SRC activities

T4   SRC year planner

T5   SRC representative feedback sheet

T6   SRC meeting agenda

T7   SRC meeting minutes

T8   Tackling an issue: DIVAE planning

T9   Action planner

T10   SRC resources

T11   Finance planner

T12   Solving problems

1. Name

The name of our organisation is:

2. Aims

The *purpose* of the SRC is to:

Activities: The SRC will: *(what sorts of things the SRC will do)*

3. Membership

3.1 *Representation*
The SRC is composed of

3.2 *Conduct*
Representatives will (e.g. attend meetings regularly, report to home groups)

3.3 *Termination of membership*
If an SRC representative (*e.g. does not attend meetings, etc.*)

4. Elections

4.1 *Appointment to the SRC is by* (*e.g. election/volunteering/appointment*):

4.2 *Method of appointments*

4.3 *When appointments will be made* (*e.g. when elections are held*)

5. Positions

(*The SRC will, each year, elect the following positions from among its members*)

5.1 *Executive positions* (*chairperson, secretary, treasurer, etc*.)

5.2 *Representatives on other bodies*

5.3 *Other positions*

6. Role statements of officers (or a general statement referring to an attachment)

7. Role of SRC support teacher

8. Meetings

8.1 *Frequency of meetings*
Meetings of the SRC shall be held...

8.2 *Annual General Meetings (AGM)*
 This meeting shall be held...

8.3 *Special meetings*
A special meeting of the SRC shall be held if

8.4 *Quorum*
In order for decisions to be made by a meeting of the SRC, there needs to be ….…..…. representatives present
(*often a percentage of the total*):

8.5 *Voting rights*
Each representative shall exercise one vote...

8.6 *Meeting procedures* (*or a general statement referring to an attachment, e.g. meeting procedures shall be determined by the SRC from time to time and attached to this constitution*):

9. Committees

The SRC shall establish committees and working parties as required...

10. Amendments to the constitution

Amendments to the constitution shall be made... (*how?*)

T2. GROUP AGREEMENT

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENTS

If I am unable to complete something, I will:

[ ]

If I am unable to continue on the SRC, I will:

[ ]

In working as a member of the SRC, I will:

[ ]

GROUP AGREEMENT

To make sure we achieve our SRC goals – on time, and to the best possible standards – we will:

[ ]

For the safety of all those involved – including the physical safety of people and property – we will:

[ ]

To protect people's privacy or reputation, we will:

[ ]

To enable everyone to feel included, valued and respected, we will:

[ ]

To make sure we have school support, we will:

[ ]

T3. BRAINSTORM OF SRC ACTIVITIES

Activity	Last year's activities	This year's activities		Other ideas
		Election promises made	Opportunities for activity this year	
Curriculum				
Social activities				
Physical infrastructure				
Rules				
Advocacy				
Fundraising				
Social culture and wellbeing				
Community action				
Interschool/SRC networking				

T4. SRC YEAR PLANNER

TERM _____

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

TERM _____

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

TERM _____

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

TERM _____

Week no.	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					
7.					
8.					
9.					
10.					
11.					
12.					

T5. SRC REPRESENTATIVE FEEDBACK SHEET

Class or year group: **Date:**

SRC Meeting   **Class Meeting**

Issues: I need to report these from the SRC to the class for their responses

Issues raised by the SRC: (I'll need to report these to the class)	**Feedback from the class:** (What the class said in response)

Take these responses back to the SRC

Report the SRC responses to the class

Ideas: I need to take these from the class to the SRC for discussion

Response of the SRC to these issues: (I'll need to report these to the class)	**Issues from the class:** (The class wants these taken to the SRC)

T6. SRC MEETING AGENDA

Meeting Date and Time: **Meeting Place:**

1. Attendance

2. Apologies

3. Agenda review

- *Purpose and aims of the meeting*
- *Chairperson / facilitators*

4. Previous meeting's minutes

Moved that the minutes of the meeting of _____ be accepted.

(moved: _____ ; seconded:_____)

Decision *(agreed / not agreed)*

5. Matters arising from minutes (report on actions from last meeting)

6. Correspondence

a. In

b. Out

7. Reports

8. General Business

9. Date and time of next meeting

Meeting Date and Time: **Meeting Place:**

Chairperson: **Minute taker:**

Attendance: **Apologies:**

Agenda Item	Discussion	Decision	Action (by whom & by when)
			Continues page over →

Agenda Item	Discussion	Decision	Action (by whom & by when)

Date, time and place of next meeting:

T8. TACKLING AN ISSUE: DIVAE PLANNING

DEFINE: Topic name and description

What is meant by the topic? Who is raising it? Why is it an issue?

INVESTIGATE: Finding out about the topic

What is happening now? What has happened before? What are our experiences? Who could we ask?

VISION: Our goals and/or the changes needed

What should it be like? 'A school/world where…'. What needs to change to bring this about?

Summarise on 'Vision' and 'Changes' posters

ACT: The action to be taken

What is meant by the topic? Who is raising it? Why is it an issue?

Develop an action plan

EVALUATE: Reflecting on the outcomes

What is meant by the topic? Who is raising it? Why is it an issue?

Write a description of your action, including your reflections

T9. ACTION PLANNER

Action title: *Name of our action*

Action team: *Coordinator and support team*

Goal: *What we want to achieve*

Why?: *Reasons, possible arguments against our plan, our responses to these arguments*

Audience: *Who we need to involve or convince; who will benefit and how (particular group, year level, whole school, whole community)*

What we will do: *Summary of planned action*

Continues page over ➜

Action steps: *the steps we will take*

Step	What?	Who will do it?	By when?	Resources needed?
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				
6.				
7.				

Resources: *Funds that are needed; cost of the plan; other resources or support we'll need*

Support: *Who can help us?*

Links: *Links to other groups*

Evaluation: *How we will know if we succeeded; and how we will report on the completion of the action*

Celebration: *How we will celebrate completing the action; and how we will acknowledge the students and staff who have helped us*

Resources	We have	We need to get	Who or where from? How?
Enthusiastic SRC members			
SRC support teacher			
Support from the student body			
Support from the principal and staff			
Time for SRC members			
SRC budget (funds)			
SRC room			
SRC meeting room			
SRC filing cabinet			
SRC laptop/computer			
SRC digital camera			
SRC minute/record book			
Folders for SRC members			
SRC noticeboard			
SRC mail-slot/pigeonhole			
Access to the photocopier			
SRC website			
SRC column in newsletters			
SRC badge			
SRC members' photos on display			
SRC page in school diary			
SRC training events			
Access to SRC networking			

T11. FINANCE PLANNER

Account name

Starting date	Starting amount

Date	Description	Amount received	Amount spent	Balance

Total received	Total spent	Final balance

PLUS any future income known: +

Sub-total =

MINUS any commitments known: −

Total funds available: =

As of date: _____

T12. SOLVING PROBLEMS

Step 1: Define – what is the problem or issue?

Define outcome – what do we want to happen?

Step 2: Who are people we could ask for help or advice?

Who	Names	The help or advice we could ask for
Family		
Friends		
School or Community		
Other		

Step 3: What has already been tried?

What are some possible solutions?

Solution A

Solution B

Solution C

Solution D

Step 4 (Choose) We will try this first

Action 1:

Action 2:

Action 3:

Action 4:

And then, just in case:
Second Solution

Action 1:

Action 2:

Action 3:

Action 4:

Evaluate:
How did it go? What happened?

What now?

The resources that are summarised in this section are available electronically on the VicSRC website (www.vicsrc.org.au).

R1   *Criteria for effective student councils*

R2   *Inclusive committee procedures*

R3   *Ten big ideas for student councils*

R4   *Examples of SRC constitutions*

Additional SRC Resources

The resources that are summarised in this section are referred to in this kit and are available on the VicSRC website at: www.vicsrc.org.au.

R1: Criteria for effective student councils

This article suggests that there are 10 possible criteria for a successful SRC. Your SRC can use the criteria to think about how well you are doing.

This resource can provide further guidance when you are using section 1. 4 of this kit, and parts of the article are referred to in section 1.7.

R2: Inclusive committee procedures

This resource explains that if a school council or decision-making body is serious about supporting student participation, then it needs to look at the way it operates. It provides some suggestions about inclusive committee procedures to encourage the active participation of students. The ideas in this resource will help when you are using section 3.2 of this kit.

R3: Ten big ideas for student councils

Looking for some big ideas to inspire your SRC? This article provides guidance on several important issues, including setting up portfolios, getting out of the fundraising trap, organising an SRC training camp and mentoring younger SRC students.

This resource can assist with sections 1.2 and 2.2 of this kit.

R4: Examples of SRC constitutions

When you are drawing up your SRC constitution, it might be helpful to refer to some examples so that you know that you are on the right track! R4 contains examples of a few SRC constitutions – which you can use to see what other schools are doing and incorporate some of their ideas into your own constitution (see section 1.4 of this kit for further information).