**Inducting and supporting student members on councils**



2019 is the second year that schools with enrolments at year seven and above are required to have two representatives in the student member category on school council. Schools were required to conduct a nomination process for representatives in the student member category, and to hold an election if required.

Student members of council benefit from support and encouragement in order to induct and support them to fulfil the duties of a school councillor. Below is a table which outlines some issues student members may face as new school councillors and provides suggestions on how school councils may support to their student members.

**Possible issues students may face as they take their place on school council:**

Inexperience around meetings and meeting procedures, including DET language, meeting protocols and conventions, motions, agendas, asking questions and confidently arguing a case.

**Supports may include:**

* Providing a mentor who is trained, briefs students before and after meetings and perhaps sits with the student during meetings.
* Supportive meeting structure that encourages participation, including a glossary of terms and acronyms, a student report template, having them propose or second motions and participate in discussion.
* Principal and president meet with students to discuss the role of school councillor.
* Provide student members with responsibilities that will ensure they are included and accountable. These responsibilities may include membership of subcommittees and working groups, and can be increased as the students’ knowledge and capacity increases.

**Possible issues students may face as they take their place on school council:**

Access to school council resources and understanding of Departmental requirements and processes, especially around legal issues; policy content and requirements; school data, including budgets and other financial information; strategic planning.

**Supports may include:**

* Ensure that students have the opportunity to participate in school council training and are aware of, and use, the Department’s resources.
* Ensure students have access to appropriate school documentation, strategic plans, AIP, budgets, etc.
* Arrange for students to meet with key school staff such as business and HR managers and curriculum and wellbeing coordinators, and to be briefed on their key functions and documents like budgets, strategic and annual implementation plans, NAPLAN and other data.

**Possible issues students may face as they take their place on school council:**

A capacity to present the views of their peers, including; canvasing opinion and viewpoints from their peers and presenting them at meetings and how to manage peers’ expectations and convey when things are not possible.

**Supports may include:**

* Mentors discuss with students their role, ways to canvas opinions (e.g., talking and listening, surveys, focus groups,) and prepare reports to council, make and argue a case using evidence and data, and report back to peers.
* School has a leadership strategy and structures to support student members and encourage discussion and feedback, eg SRC, pastoral groups.
* Provide opportunities for student members to meet together to discuss and share ideas on issues in common. This may involve a student member focused governance training, or perhaps the establishment of a local student members’ network.

**Possible issues students may face as they take their place on school council:**

Management of their time with study, council and other commitments (e.g., senior students need to focus on assessment and exams at various times of the year).

Capacity to get to and from school council meetings in the evening.

**Supports may include:**

* Mentors work with students to manage workload. Ensure that teachers are aware of the student members and their commitment.
* The principal and/or school council president liaise with student members’ parents to ensure they are aware of requirements, meetings and times. Perhaps arrange for students to be dropped home after a meeting.