

TOP TEN PRACTICAL TIPS FOR SCHOOL COUNCILS

As informed by the school council forums, the School Governance Network's ten practical tips for councils follow. For more information and support, contact Nicholas Abbey at admin@sgn.org.au or 0402 152 634.

As well, see our very useful [Great governance, great partnerships: A guide for school councils](#) publication.

Some key questions that school councils may consider	What could our council improve and how?
<p>1. Induction and training. What induction process do we have in place? What school governance training will our council be involved in this year?</p> <p>The Department of Education and Training provides free face-to-face training. See Improving School Governance at http://www.schoolgovernance.vic.edu.au.</p> <p>Synergistiq is delivering the training in 2019. To access the free training, contact Synergistiq on (03) 9069 5598 and at sct@synergistiq.com.</p> <p>VicSRC www.vicsrc.org.au has practical tips for how student members can effectively contribute to council.</p>	
<p>2. Planning ahead and an action list. Do we have a work plan for the year? Does our council also have an action list/spreadsheet (including decisions, progress status, and responsible persons) in addition to the council meeting minutes?</p> <p>Does the council have a succession plan for new office bearers and to assist with the transfer of knowledge?</p>	
<p>3. Effective school council meetings. What, in particular, can we improve about our council meetings – and how?</p> <p>Information on effective council meetings can be found at https://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/teachers/management/community/Pages/schoolcouncilsmeet.aspx, which includes council meeting guidelines, a sample agenda and minutes template, sample standing orders, code of conduct, managing conflict, and the conduct of meetings.</p>	
<p>4. Online access to our key documents. Do we have an online repository for, and easy access to, our council's past meeting minutes and other key documents such as the school's Strategic Plan, our standing orders, etc.?</p>	
<p>5. Promoting learning partnerships. When was the last time that we had a policy discussion at council about the 'how' of further developing stronger</p>	

learning partnerships among students, parents/carers, and teachers? And about the 'how' of building a stronger learning community in which teachers', students', and parents' knowledge is further shared to improve students' learning, developmental, health and wellbeing outcomes?

Some councils turn part of every second meeting into a workshop (for a deeper dive into issues such as a policy around supporting and promoting literacy and numeracy partnerships). The Department's *Literacy and Numeracy Strategy Phase 2: Achieving Excellence and Equity in Literacy and Numeracy* can be a great basis for a council policy workshop.

6. **Communication.** How can we improve our council's school community profile and two-way communication with the school community?

Is there visibility within the school community and accessibility to council members? Are councillors' contact details provided? And where?

Is information about council meetings, including past decisions and upcoming meetings, provided to the school community? How?

7. **Use of sub-committees and teams.** Are we optimising the use of school council sub-committees, teams and working groups? Who's involved?

Are we creative with the issues that we explore in these important policy discussions such as student leadership, personalisation, and technology?

8. **Our community partnerships.** With whom in the wider community are we already working in strong partnerships, and what are the gaps? What other partnerships should be developed and supported?

Do we have a list of relevant groups, organisations, other schools, networks and people? Have we identified the opportunities for how our council may also meet and work strategically with them?

What links may be built through school community members?

9. **Information and contacts.** Do we have information about key contacts and support at the Department of Education and Training, the School Governance Network, Parents Victoria, VicSRC, and the Country Education Partnership? Other stakeholders who can support us?

Do we access these organisations to support our council?

10. **Reflecting on what we do.** Effective school councils obviously reflect on their performance. The Department has a tool to assist councils to do this: <https://regionalservicesgroup.createsend1.com/t/d-l-bjhjilt-yhkkydyhir-i/>

The information from the self-assessment can be used to determine strengths and weaknesses and specific actions needed for improvement, including through training.