1.1 **SRCs:**
  *What are they? Why have one?*
  Why have an SRC?

1.2 **What can SRCs do?**

1.3 **Establishing an SRC**

1.4 **Establishing SRC structures**
  SRC constitution

1.5 **Who should be on an SRC?**
  Qualities of ideal student representatives
  Process for selecting students for the SRC
  Representing your diverse student population

1.6 **Selecting an SRC support teacher**
  How many teachers does it take?
  What does an SRC support teacher do?
  Qualities of a valued SRC support teacher
  The support teacher selection process

1.7 **An effective SRC**
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
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)

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**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.

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**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.
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.

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 to make your SRC more effective.
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)

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.

Good Practice

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.

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?

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?

‘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)
What can SRCs do?

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

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.

**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.

 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 sections 2.2 and 3.4 for more on how to do this.

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

Adapted from an exercise in Clay, Gold and Hannam, Secondary School Councils Toolkit, School Councils UK, p. 29.
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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1</th>
<th>24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be a purposeful SRC:</strong></td>
<td>Why do you have an SRC? Why do you want one in your school? What do you want it to do? What is possible?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be a representative SRC:</strong></td>
<td>Is the SRC representing all the students? How many students does your school have? How will the SRC most effectively represent them all?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be a well-structured SRC:</strong></td>
<td>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’?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be a diverse SRC:</strong></td>
<td>Is the SRC inclusive of the diverse student population in your school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be an effective SRC:</strong></td>
<td>What does your SRC want to achieve? Will this require lots of students for different roles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be a practical SRC:</strong></td>
<td>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?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>We want our SRC to be a supported SRC:</strong></td>
<td>How much support is there for the SRC? How much student enthusiasm? How much teacher support is available?</td>
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</table>

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

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?

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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All classes are represented.</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is a direct link between representatives and school units, and this makes voting and reporting back easier.</td>
<td>• Some classes might not want to have representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The structure can encourage home group meetings, discussion and decision-making.</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There are usually regularly timetabled opportunities for discussion with the student body without having to negotiate with individual teachers and classes.</td>
<td>• Fairly small numbers of students are involved, which could lead to elitism and separation from the general student body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The majority of staff are more likely to be aware that the SRC exists and that it’s doing something.</td>
<td>• 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.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• All areas of the school are represented.</td>
<td>• 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).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Student numbers in each group are smaller and hence meeting processes are easier.</td>
<td>• Still fairly small numbers of students are involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• More students can be involved at different levels.</td>
<td>• More open to popularity contests and to appointment of only articulate, confident students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reporting back possibilities are easy (e.g. at assemblies).</td>
<td>• If subschools function independently, this model could isolate junior students from opportunities to learn from senior students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Senior SRC members can play important mentoring roles with other students and groups.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Subschool A
(eg Junior)

Class Reps

Subschool B
(eg Middle)

Subschool C
(eg Senior)

Subschool A
(Junior) SRC

Subschool B
(Middle) SRC

Subschool C
(Senior) SRC

Coordinating 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 co-opt 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
- 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.)

#### Disadvantages
- 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.

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**Home groups**

- Several students from each home group appointed to various groups

**Student forum**

- SRC EXECUTIVE
- Curriculum
- Activities
- Fundraising
- Canteen
- Facilities

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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**

- 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.

**Disadvantages**

- 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

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.

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

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.

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 change 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).

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.

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 aren’t always doing and saying 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 handover 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.

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.

**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**

- 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.

**Disadvantages**

- 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.

**Favours these skill sets**

- Public communication
- Passionate
- Visionary
- Advocates

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**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.

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Figure 1.1: Methods for selecting students for the SRC

Students are elected → SRC → Students apply and are appointed

Students volunteer → SRC → Students are coopted
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 on making a selection the panel appoints students to the SRC.

### Advantages
- It can focus commitment.
- It can make sure applications are examined carefully.
- It can specify criteria.

### Disadvantages
- 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.

### Favours these skill sets
- 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
- 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.

### Disadvantages
- 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.

### Favours these skill sets
- 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
- 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.

### Disadvantages
- 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.

### Favours these skill sets
- 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.

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.

Good Practice
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 SRCs 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 silent 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?

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 with 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.

See section 2.4: Establishing SRC roles for information about establishing the specific roles that your own teacher(s) will take.
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
- **A democratic leader:** 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.

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.

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)
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 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.


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

- **A**: Always
- **F**: Frequently
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### Criterion 2: The SRC has clear structures and processes

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<tr>
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<th>Priority for action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a clear and known process for a student to become a member of the SRC through election or appointment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a known and written constitution describing how the SRC works.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This constitution and how the SRC is working are reviewed regularly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC has internal structures and processes that are appropriate to its work (including chairing, recording decisions, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRC meetings are well run, effective (productive) and enjoyable.</td>
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### Criterion 3: The SRC is broadly representative of students

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<tr>
<th>Criterion 3: The SRC is broadly representative of students</th>
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<th>Priority for action</th>
<th>Action to be taken</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students are elected or appointed through democratic and representative processes (by election, or from volunteers, or by other agreed processes).</td>
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<tr>
<td>There is a range of students on the SRC – in age, ability, school engagement, ethnicity, gender, etc. – who broadly represent students in the school.</td>
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<tr>
<td>No significant group of students is, or feels, overrepresented on or by the SRC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being on the SRC is a desirable outcome for a broad range of students.</td>
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</table>
### Criterion 4: The SRC reports to students and gets advice from students

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<th>Priority for action</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SRC representatives get advice and support from other students in different ways.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time is available for SRC members to report back to other students and to get advice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The views of other students are considered and taken seriously by the SRC.</td>
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### Criterion 5: The SRC deals with a range of issues

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<th>Priority for action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The SRC is aware of the different things that an SRC can do.</td>
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<tr>
<td>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.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC controls the time that it allocates to different issues and topics – it makes sure that one or two things don’t dominate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC sets up appropriate internal structures to deal with different issues, e.g. subgroups or working parties.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC is effective in implementing and working on a range of issues.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC completes its plans and achieves what it sets out to do.</td>
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### Key:
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<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion 6: The SRC is trained and networked to be effective</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate training events are organised within the school and made available to all members of the SRC.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Members of the SRC get follow-up support and informal training in the skills needed to do their work.</td>
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<td>The SRC has access to interschool and statewide networking opportunities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC is a member of the VicSRC.</td>
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<td><strong>Criterion 7: The SRC has time to do its work and gets credit for its work</strong></td>
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<td>The SRC meets at a time convenient to all members.</td>
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<td>Time is provided, as part of the school curriculum, for SRC members to do their work.</td>
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<td>Credit is provided for SRC members in order to recognise their contribution to the school and to their own learning.</td>
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<td>The SRC is publicly acknowledged for its work.</td>
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<td><strong>Criterion 8: The SRC is connected to the school’s decision-making</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Students are represented on the school’s decision-making body, either from the SRC, or directly from the student body.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students are represented on a range of other committees within the school (e.g. uniform committee, canteen committee, curriculum committee, facilities, etc.).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student views are heard and considered seriously in all these forums.</td>
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<td>The SRC is asked for its views on all important matters.</td>
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<td><strong>Criterion 9: The SRC has teacher and principal support</strong></td>
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<td>There is an SRC support teacher who has time-release to support the SRC.</td>
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<td>This teacher supports and advises the SRC without taking over.</td>
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<td>There are regular meetings of the SRC with the principal and other appropriate members of the school administration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The views and suggestions of the SRC are seriously considered and discussed.</td>
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<td><strong>Criterion 10: The SRC has the resources it needs</strong></td>
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<td>The SRC has a budget that it controls and allocates.</td>
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<td>The SRC has access to practical resources, such as photocopying, mailing, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The SRC has an SRC notice board that it controls.</td>
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<td>The SRC has a space of its own – e.g. an office, a filing cabinet, etc.</td>
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