10 BIG Ideas
for Student Councils

What should Student Councils be doing? Strangely perhaps, many Student Councils struggle for ideas about how to represent students. Many complain that other students aren't interested.

So here are some ideas - **10 BIG ideas** - for starting some effective Student Council action in your school. You don't have to be doing *all* of these – and you may already be doing some of these ... or better things. Hopefully, some of them will be useful starting points for your Council. You know what will work and what is needed in your school.

As we've thought about this, we've realised that there are differences between the ideas that will work in primary and secondary school. But we've written these ideas here so that they can be adapted and used at all levels. Perhaps some of them will be more possible in secondary schools; perhaps some of them are more important in primary schools. We'd like some information back from you about your **BIG** ideas - what works for you? – so that you are effective.

We've also referred here a few times to the book **Student Councils and Beyond**. This was published by **Connect** in 2005 and contains lots of practical ideas as well as examples (eg of surveys). See elsewhere in this issue for information about ordering a copy.

10 BIG Ideas for Student Councils

1: Listening to Students

Commit and plan to consult

Brainstorm ideas

Survey

Make time

Report back and discuss

Prioritise issues

Feedback results

The **purpose** of this is to find out what students in the school are saying are the important issues for them - **so that the Student Council can act and represent students' needs.** Finding out might be as simple as *listening* to students' conversations, or starting a *discussion* in home groups (pastoral groups or English classes) or organising a formal *survey*.

The **first step**, however, is to make a commitment at a Student Council meeting that you *want to* find out what students are concerned about. **Why** do you want to do this? What will you **do** with the results?

Then **brainstorm** some ideas about *how* you could find out: think of conversation starters, how to get up in front of a class and start a discussion, or possibilities for a more formal survey (see some examples in *Student Councils and Beyond*: pages 67-69). Think of some questions to ask. How will you record the ideas that you hear?

You will need to **make time** to listen! That might mean reminding each representative to spend some time listening to others - before the next meeting. It might mean asking a teacher for time in class or in home groups to ask some questions. It might mean making time to create, photocopy, distribute and then analyse a survey.

You will also need to make time at the next Student Council meeting for representatives to **report back** about what they have heard. Set a deadline for listening, then put this high on your meeting's agenda. It might mean a longer discussion: What did people *mean*? *Why* did they say that? What's *really* worrying them? What should the Student Council be *doing*?

And that's the important question: **what should the Student Council be doing?** You probably can't do something about everything that students are concerned about. So what is your **priority**? (And why?) What are the *main* things that students are concerned about? What do they want their representatives to *do*?

You may also need to find out more information: *how many* students are affected by the important issue that some have raised? Perhaps you will need to do a more specific survey of students about the issue.

Finally, as you are working on the issues, don't forget to tell students what you are doing – **feed the results back** to them. Nothing annoys students more than being asked for their opinions and then never hearing what happened!

2: Ask About Opportunities
for Student Council action

> **What major planning is being undertaken in the school, and how can the Student Council be involved?**

With the best will in the world, Student Councils can be overlooked when important decisions are made within a school. For example, a very supportive Principal in a secondary school forgot to let the Student Council know that there was a review of the Year 9 curriculum about to happen – and forgot to ask them for student input.

And a primary school forgot to tell their Student Council about plans for re-plumbing the school ... including re-positioning the drinking taps – and put them in the wrong positions because they didn't have student advice.

Make appointment with Principal etc

Ask about plans

Emphasise value of student input

Ask for a formal approach

Make time on agenda to discuss

Set up student working groups

Gather student views and ideas

Feedback results to students

Sometimes, Student Councils need to ask about what major plans are being made in the school and how they might have a role in representing students on these.

Start by making an **appointment** with the Principal, Deputy Principal, Curriculum Coordinator, Welfare Coordinator or other relevant people to find out about the initiatives, plans or needs facing the school this year. What is already happening? What is likely to develop? And then ask the important question: *how can the Student Council help you involve students in this planning?*

You might need to argue the **importance** of getting input from students. After all, students have specialised knowledge about what happens around the school, knowledge that no-one else possesses. They are also centrally affected by these plans, so the implementation of the plans will depend on student knowledge about them and perhaps student agreement with them. The Student Council should be able to say that it is uniquely in touch with student views, and therefore can play a vital role in the development of the planning. It can research the issues, consult with students, and take part as a partner in the discussions and decisions.

If there are many plans, the Student Council representatives might need to **prioritise** what it can work on. What are the most important plans: the ones that affect students most? Which ones can students have best input on?

Ask the school to **officially approach the Student Council** to ask for their involvement. This might mean a letter to the Student Council outlining the planning and asking for their assistance. That way, the issue gets to be on the agenda of the Student Council. The letter should also give information about the *time-line* and the *opportunities* for getting involved. When do decisions need to be made? By whom? Can the Student Council be formally represented here?

Make time on your Student Council **agenda** to discuss these issues. Representatives will need time to take the ideas back to classes. It will probably be valuable to set up a special **Working Group** of students to organise the discussions. They will need time to talk about the issues, about how to get student input, and how to present the results to the school. A Working Group might also work alongside teachers and parents on the issue.

After the Student Council has considered what you've found out (results of research, collection of student views etc), make a **formal response** to the Principal or School Council. And don't forget to **feedback** that information to the students too, to let them know what is happening and what other students think.

10 BIG Ideas for Student Councils

3: Manage It, Don't Do It

Some students approach the Student Council with an issue on which they want action.

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Listen to the students and their reasons

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Decide that this *is* an issue for the Student Council

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Set up a Working Group of the students concerned

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Appoint a Student Council member

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Identify and ask a support teacher

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Provide time for the Working Group

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Agenda the topic at the Student Council

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Publicise outcomes

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*There are lots of things that the Student Council can do. If students are concerned about something (the environment, bullying, curriculum etc) they should be asking the Student Council to take action. But that doesn't mean that the Student Council has to do everything. The role of the Student Council can be to support those students who are passionate about something, to investigate and act on it, on behalf of all students. The Student Council **manages** the process – but doesn't have to **do** it all.*

When a group of students raise an issue, the first thing is to **listen** to them and their **reasons**. Ask them to make a presentation to a Student Council meeting: What is this about? Why is it important? Who does it affect? What should happen?

The Student Council will need to **agree** that this is an issue you think should be pursued. *(If you don't agree it is something the Student Council wants to support, there's nothing to stop these students then organising something for themselves, if they feel so strongly about it.)*

So the first step is to set up a **Working Group** of the students involved – make this a formal group of the Student Council. They might be surprised that you're asking them to do the work, rather than just doing it for them! But this is a great way to get more students actively involved, especially students who might not ever get to be on a Student Council. And it's less work for the whole Council.

Appoint a member of the Student Council to work with this Group – to support and liaise with them, and to advise them about processes.

The Group might also need a **supportive teacher** to work as a consultant to them, and the Student Council can identify that teacher, approach them, and ask if they're willing to do so.

The Working Group will need **time** to meet. So the Student Council can negotiate with the school for that time – and for academic credit for their work if that's appropriate and possible.

Time is also needed on the Student Council **meeting agenda** for the Working Group to report back on their progress and on their proposals. Putting it on the agenda also creates an expectation that the Group will take it seriously: meet, research and plan – and be accountable for the issue that is important to them ... and to all.

Finally, when the Working Group has presented its results, had its proposals accepted by the Student Council, and taken action – and when there are results – don't forget to **publicise** the work as part of what the Student Council has done. You could organise for the students involved, for example, to present at an assembly. You could also arrange for them to receive certificates or other acknowledgement of their work.

For more information on this approach, see the article in *Connect* 163 (February 2007) on page 10.

4: Set Up Portfolios

*The **purpose** of Portfolios is both to spread the work of the Student Council to all members (rather than rely on a small Executive), and also to make sure that **everyone on the Student Council is vitally important** to its work: everyone has a job, and the effective work of the Student Council depends on everyone doing their job well.*

Brainstorm around Student Council tasks

Ask members of Student Council to nominate their areas of interest

Allocate Portfolios

Define detailed roles and tasks

Make times to work on areas

Mentor younger students

Make space on Student Council agendas for reports

Review system at end of year

You could start by **brainstorming** about the tasks that are to be carried out by members of the Student Council. Everyone will be representing a group of students: a class or grade or home-group or a team. But as well as that, there is other Student Council work, both in terms of keeping the Student Council going, and in terms of the regular topics about which the Student Council acts: eg publicity, preparing meetings and agendas, overseeing finance, environment, canteen, website, teacher liaison, parent liaison and so on. This list will vary from school to school.

If you're new members of the Student Council, you may want to *seek advice* from last year's members or from a teacher who worked with the Student Council, about what the important areas are.

When you have a list (and you may need to add to it as the year goes on), make a **formal decision** to set these up as Portfolio areas. Ask all members of the Student Council to **nominate** their areas of interest – they may give preferences. *Each member is expected to take on one area.*

Then **allocate** people to each Portfolio. If you have a large Student Council or a small list, several people can be in each Portfolio area. But someone should then be the *convenor* of this Portfolio, with responsibility for coordinating it - like the 'Minister for ... '.

The role of the students in each Portfolio is to *manage* the area, not *do* everything in it. Those students have responsibility for making sure that the Student Council is working in that area, and that reports are presented to Student Council meetings about the area. If there are relevant issues raised in discussions, they can also be referred to the Portfolio for further discussion before coming back to meetings.

So the first task of each area will be to develop a **more detailed description** of the area of interest, and what the members will do. This should be presented to the whole Student Council for approval. But the good news is that you might only need to do this once, when you are setting up this system – though you will need to review it each year to check that it is still relevant.

There will need to be **time** on Student Council agendas for the Portfolio areas to report back – maybe not every meeting though (and you can pass if there's nothing new to report). Time is also needed for Portfolios to meet and work on their own – *perhaps every second Student Council meeting could provide this time to work in smaller groups*.

Portfolios are also a way for senior students to **introduce younger students** to the work of the Student Council, with a deliberate mix of ages and plans to 'teach' new students about what happens. They are also a way for students who are not on the Student Council, but enthusiastic about an area, to get involved.

Finally, any system is only as good as it works in practice. So at the end of each year, spend some time **reviewing** this system. What's worked well? What's not worked? Why? What changes are needed next year? What different Portfolios areas might we recommend?

5: Get Out of the Fund-raising Trap

A:

Set up a Fund-raising sub-group

Give them power to make fund-raising decisions

Report back to Student Council

B:

Brainstorm about purposes of funding

Develop your Mission Statement

Develop your funding guidelines

Raise money

Advertise grants and call for applications

Compare applications with your guidelines

Provide funds

Follow-up grants about their impact

When we ask Student Councils what they have been doing, fund-raising – usually for charities – dominates the work. These are good works, they provide Student Councils with an 'easy' role in the school, they provide students with practice in organising ... but they also often mean that the Student Council does nothing else! **In that way, fund-raising is a trap.** *It steals time and energy from the broader range of what Student Councils should be doing. Here are two ways to escape:*

The first approach is to **set up a fund-raising group** as a Portfolio or sub-group of the Student Council. This group then has **power to organise events** that raise money on behalf of, and in the name of, the Student Council.

However the group should be required to meet outside Student Council meetings and to give a **brief report** (amongst other sub-groups) to Student Council meetings.

The second approach is more extensive, and can be used as a follow-on to or part of the first approach. It requires discussion about **why** the Student Council wants to raise money. This should be in terms of the *changes* that the Student Council wants to see – its purposes or goals in the community or the school. One way in which it can make these changes is by providing money to other groups.

So to start with, the Student Council needs to **brainstorm** the nature of these changes. This can be formalised in the development of a **Mission Statement** perhaps along the lines: *"We want to provide funds to achieve ... (this sort of world ... or this sort of change ... or ....) "* The Student Council should endorse this statement and formally set up a group to achieve this. In some cases, students have formed a *Student Foundation*, separate from the Student Council, but reporting to it, to do this work.

Then students can **raise money** 'as usual', with various activities negotiated with the school.

At the same time as raising the money, the Student Foundation (let's call it that) also develops a set of **guidelines** to support its work. It will be making financial grants to groups, so how will it decide between groups and the work they do?

Once some money is raised (and the Student Foundation needs to know how much it has to give out), the Foundation **advertises** the availability of grants, and the guidelines by which it will make the grants. These can be advertised in the school or in the community.

When groups or individuals apply for a grant, the Student Foundation then **matches their reasons** against the Foundation's Mission Statement and guidelines. Are the groups trying to achieve what the Student Council and Student Foundation want to achieve? Are they likely to succeed?

Decisions then have to be made about providing funding. If there's not enough money, will part-funding achieve the goals? Only then are **funds provided.**

Finally, members of the Student Foundation **keep contact** with the groups and programs they are funding, to see if their funding is really making the changes they want.

More details about these approaches are found in *Student Councils and Beyond*, pages 29-36.

6: A Student Council Training Camp

10 B/G Ideas for Student Councils

Decide to organise Student Council training

Ask for support from the School

Work out timing, length, location, cost

Book a venue and facilitator

Collect ideas from other schools

Work out program details

Advertise and persuade all members to attend

Conduct training

Evaluate the training

*Student Councils need **time** to do their work properly. This is particularly important at the start of the year. A new Student Council needs **time to get together to learn to work as a team**, and **time to plan what it will do** throughout the year – and **how**.*

*The Student Council – and the school – should make a priority of some form of training 'retreat' as soon as possible in the school year, and make this a regular part of the school's calendar. If possible, this training should take place over several days – but even a half day is better than nothing. And where possible, this training should happen **outside** the school, so that the activities are not interrupted by bells or classes. A camp is ideal – but not always possible. **However, the most effective Student Councils do have an annual planning and training camp!***

Start by making a **commitment** within the Student Council. You should be able to say **why** you need a training camp or event.

However you will need **support from the school** to make this happen, so you'll need to **ask** and seek agreement: first from the Student Council support teacher (who is really important to make it happen, and will need to attend!), then from the Principal, and probably from the School Council. You will need to have some plans and details – including costs (but also details about when, how long, where, what). It is important to ask for funding support from the school.

So work out all the **details**: *When* is a good time in the school year? (the earlier the better); When will all students be able to attend? *How long* for? *Where* - a camp, or in a community venue? What will it *cost*? Will it be useful to have an *external facilitator* to present some training? Or can this be done by students and teachers? *(Possibilities: local youth workers, consultants, trainee teachers ...)*

And what sort of **program**? To think about this, think first about what you want to achieve. By the time you finish the camp, what sort of outcomes do you want? These will then define the formal training sessions (*how to run a meeting, how to keep minutes, how to report to classes etc*) and more general discussions (*what issues face us this year, how to manage time, possibilities for Student Council action*). It might be useful to **gather ideas** from other schools about their training and planning programs – you might know other Student Councils, or *Connect* or state-level student organisations can put you in touch with others. Also see *Student Councils and Beyond*, pages 72-94 for some ideas.

Advertise the program to all members of the Student Council. Your aim is that *everyone* must be there. (But that means you'll need to think about their study and work commitments, and also about cultural issues such as food and accommodation.) Talk to individuals and find out what they need to be able to attend. The support teacher might be able to **visit parents** to discuss the importance of the training with them.

And you're set ... to begin! Have a great time. Make sure it's **enjoyable** ... and **important**!

Afterwards, think about how it went. Prepare an **evaluation** by asking all students what went well, what could have been improved, and what plans they'd have for next time.

And file that information away for your *next* training camp.

7: A Speak-Out Day

*This is a **REALLY BIG** idea and one that takes a lot of organisation. It's not to be entered into lightly!*

Discuss at Student Council meeting
Make a proposal for Principal and School Council
Arrange possible day with school's Daily Organiser
Present to staff meeting
Develop topic starters
Organise students and teachers as facilitators and note-takers
Divide school into discussion groups
Feed results back to Student Council & School Council
Evaluate day and outcomes

The **purpose** of a Speak Out Day is to enable **all** students in the school to speak out on issues that are of concern to them. The idea is to have a time – say an afternoon – when all classes are suspended and the Student Council runs a series of *discussion groups*, either in normal class groups or in special mixed-age groups. Some of the discussion sessions can be about existing topics that the Student Council or the school wants discussed. Other sessions should be more open: using a 'search' approach, where students say what the important issues are, and reach agreement on the most important issues within the group. See *Student Councils and Beyond*, page 18, for one example.

To start, you'll need a **commitment** by the Student Council to the idea, and a clear understanding of why and how it might operate. Discuss this and **write down a request with reasons**.

Take this **proposal** to the Principal. In most cases, the proposal will need to go to School Council for approval, and this will take time. So don't expect an instant answer. You will also need to present **reasons** strongly: including what important outcomes there will be for the school. Visit and talk about the idea with the Student Council support teacher, the Curriculum Coordinator, the Daily Organiser (who does the timetable) and other people. The Daily Organiser can also help you with ideas about **when** this might occur – amongst many other things that are happening. Book it in.

Because you will need teacher support, you will probably need to present the proposal to a **staff meeting**, and give some ideas for what the role of teachers might be.

Good discussions don't just 'happen'. You need to **plan** how to start them and how to make sure they continue productively. How can you get student ideas? How can you make sure that the louder or older students don't dominate? How can you support shy students or those with language needs to speak up and be heard? You can develop some **discussion starters**, but you will also need to talk about **facilitation skills** – for students and for teachers.

On the day, the members of the Student Council should be the main **facilitators** of the discussions. Do you want teachers to help facilitate? Who else might help? In some examples, a team of local youth workers has been a useful group to assist open discussion.

It would be useful to provide some simple **training** for facilitators eg in a 1:2:4 approach for getting agreement within a group that is searching for the major issues.

And you'll need someone to **take notes** of what is being said.

The Student Council can **organise** the day – like a mini-timetable. Make sure everyone knows where to go, for how long, and what their tasks are. Also build some fun activities into the day, so that it's not all discussion groups; you could organise games or sports – and food if possible.

Have an assembly or forum at the end of the day to sum up. Collect all the notes and **summarise** them. What are students saying are the important issues to them? What are they saying about these issues? The Student Council will want to know these outcomes, and so will the School Council. **Report** to both groups.

Finally, you will again need to **evaluate** the day, finding out what works, what could have been improved and what you'll do differently when (not if) you do this again.

10 BIG Ideas for Student Councils

8. A Sharing Day for Local Student Councils

Discuss at Student Council and decide on a day
Get permission from Principal and others
Set date and space
Identify the local schools to involve
Decide how big: numbers, times
Invite schools
Decide on program and circulate this
Welcome visitors on the day: signs, name-tags
Have a great day!
Follow-up: evaluate and *next?*

Isolated Student Councils sometimes lack ideas and inspiration. Getting together with others can help a Student Council in its work and can provide both formal and informal training for members. Don't wait on someone else to organise this: you can take the initiative to invite other Student Councils to your school.

You need to be **clear** about **why** you want a day to meet with other Student Councils, and then take this as a **proposal** to your own Student Council for discussion and decision. *What do you want to get out of the day? What do you hope others will get out of it?*

Such a day will involve some changes to the school's timetable including use of rooms. So you will need **permission** from the Principal (and possibly School Council); others may be involved too (eg the Canteen might need to be involved). You will need to negotiate the idea, then set an **appropriate date**, **book spaces** (schools have used the library, a hall, common rooms and so on - or have found spaces in the community), and get **resources** (eg for food).

You will need to decide **how big** you want the day to be. Think about: How many schools? How many students from each school? How long will it go for? *(When begin and end? – think about travel times for others.)*

Identify the local schools that you want involved. Think about how wide an area is 'local'. This might depend on transport times and distances, as well as schools that have Student Councils. Teachers will be able to advise on schools that your school already networks with.

Write an **invitation** and send it to these schools. You'll need to say clearly about when and where and what times – and what you're hoping that students and Student Councils will get out of the day. Will they also need to do anything before they attend, or prepare some materials (eg a poster) for the day? Send the invitation to the Student Councils, but it might also be useful to send a copy to the Student Council support teacher and the Principal in each school.

Develop a **program** for the day. Some sessions that could be included are: a 'getting to know you' activity, sharing information about Student Councils and their work, some specific training (speaking, planning activities) – maybe a speaker if appropriate. Do you need a **facilitator** to help with the planning and the presenting? (*A local youth worker, or a teacher, or a consultant might be able to help.*) There are lots of ideas for possible programs and activities in the articles in *Connect*, or in *Student Councils and Beyond* (see pages 59-62).

You might need to phone the other schools and **remind** them, and ask that they send **RSVPs** – so you can prepare name tags, and food.

On the day, make sure that there are **clear signs** showing visiting students where to go – maybe some of your students to greet them. Have **name-tags** ready, and copies of the **program**, so they know what to expect. Let visitors know where the toilets are and of any restrictions about where they can go.

And make sure you have a great, valuable, enjoyable and busy day!

Ask students to complete an **evaluation** on the day; and talk about 'where to now?' Do other schools want to have more days like this? Will some other school take responsibility for organising the next one?

Afterwards, send a **summary** of the day – and further plans – back to all who took part.

9: Mentor Younger Students

A:

Create assistant positions

Meet together on the tasks

Report together to Student Council

B:

Decide to set up a junior training day

Get permission and set dates and times

Identify and approach the schools or grades

Follow up with formal invitations

Decide on a program

Decide who runs what

Welcome the students

Present the day

Follow-up: evaluate and write it up

Students get older and pass on - from primary school to secondary school; from secondary school to University, TAFE, work etc. What do you leave behind? Will the Student Council keep going and growing? What is your responsibility for this? Here are two BIG ideas.

The first idea is simple and can be used by any Student Council - primary or secondary: **Whenever you have some position or job, make sure you have a younger student as assistant.** So, for example, if the Student Council chairperson is in Year 11, have an assistant chairperson from Year 8. If someone from Grade 6 has responsibility for a Student Council newsletter, then have someone from Grade 3 assisting them. This way, younger students learn about the Council and its work, get skills, and are ready to take over.

You will need to make time for people to meet together, and also encourage older and younger students to both report to your meetings.

The second idea is more difficult, and *maybe* more relevant to secondary schools (though primary schools could adapt it). The idea is that the Student Council can organise a **meeting and training day** for nearby junior students. For example, a secondary school Student Council could invite all the feeder primary schools to send representatives from their Student Councils (eg JSCs) to a half-day event. Or a primary school Student Council could set up a training session for representatives from Grades Prep to 3 in the school to learn about representation, class meetings etc.

The steps involved are very similar to those in ***Big Idea 8***. You will need to make a **commitment** first: that your Student Council thinks this is a good idea. Then you will need to seek **permission** to have and host this day. Negotiate about possible **dates and places**. It is suggested that, for primary school students, *a half-day is long enough.*

Work out **which schools** (or grades) are involved, and approach them. Do the schools have a Student Council? What do they call it? Are they interested to attend? (They will probably ask you for more details about the purpose and the program – so you'd better have this worked out.)

Think about what you want to achieve. Game-playing approaches are very useful here, but all the games must have a serious intention. There are lots of ideas for activities and programs in *Student Councils and Beyond*, pages 71-94 – including some worksheets you could copy to start small group discussions. Remember to make the day **inter-active** – it shouldn't just be you talking to the students! They should be learning by doing things.

Who will run what? Divide your Student Council into small teams, with each team taking **responsibility** for an activity or a session. Talk with teachers or youth workers or consultants about what and how you could present your session. ***Practise!***

You might also need to **follow-up** the schools (or grades) and **invite** them personally. If possible, visit the schools (or grades) so they know who you are beforehand.

On the day, make sure you **welcome** them, especially if they're new to your school. Have food and drink for them at a break. Make sure the activities move along at a *fast and enjoyable pace*.

Finally, meet afterwards to talk about how it went - what you did well and what you should improve. An **evaluation** form can also get this information from the participants. Write up what happened. Then: *what's next?*

10: A Student Council Resource Bank

Talk about your needs at a Student Council meeting

Work out the form of resources that people need

Discuss with staff from the Library or Resource Centre

Work out how you will use resources

Work out a location

Find out what's available

Work out a 'wish list' and price it

Ask for a budget

Buy the resources

Review the use at the end of the year

This is a very simple idea that everyone will say 'Yeah' to, but one that then works out to be more complicated! The simple idea is that your Student Council should have the materials – books, training kits, ideas, DVDs etc – that they need to do its job better.

You'd better start by thinking about what it is that you do **need**. Raise the topic at a Student Council meeting and **brainstorm** all sorts of possibilities. Do you need *kits* to help you train or *ideas* from other schools (stories) or *sample constitutions* or inspiring and motivating *thoughts* - or what? Do you need these as *books, magazines, posters, DVDs, CDs, kits, photo-copied worksheets* - or what?

Early on, make an appointment to discuss your needs with the **staff** in the school's Library or Resource Centre. They will know what sorts of things are available - or be able to search for them. Importantly, they will also know what's **already in the school**, and perhaps under-used. *Where is that kit or that DVD that arrived a year ago and has been gathering dust?* Maybe the Student Council can use it better.

These staff will also be useful consultants on many other issues, such as how to **store** the resources, how to keep track of them and how to make them **available** to students. And they'll probably end up doing the **ordering** for you.

So work out how you want to **use** the resources. Do you want to work through some things in a meeting? Do you want to individually borrow them and read them? Do you want to have small groups discuss them? Do you want to show them to other students outside the Student Council (eg at assemblies)? Do you want to make a display of them around the school?

Take *Connect*, for example: *how do you use this as a resource? Is it passed round at Student Council meetings? Do students and teachers read the stories and ideas here? Where is it stored after people have seen it? If there are ideas there that might be used in the future, who knows about them? How could you use it better?*

That means you will also need to work out a possible **location** for these resources. This will depend on what you already have available and what is possible: *a Student Council room? a Student Council noticeboard? a filing cabinet?* The location should be both secure and available. You don't want precious resources going missing, but neither do you want them locked away where no-one can use them.

Once you've done all this, the Library/Resource Centre staff will help you draw a **list** together of what's available. You'll need to match this against your needs, against how you see yourselves using these resources, against your storage space – and against what you can **afford**. That probably means you'll need to **prioritise** the resources: what's your 'wish list'?

You will then need to go to someone (the Principal, the Bursar or the School Manager) to ask for a **budget** to get these resources. You'll need to be ready with *arguments* about *why* they're important, how you'll *use* them, and how they will *improve* the Student Council's work.

The most exciting time will be **getting the resources**, and putting them to use. Maybe *stagger* the purchases over a time, so they don't come all at once. That way, you can explore each one and work out a plan for its best use – before the next one comes. And you don't then forget that you got something.

Finally, *was it worth it?* After you've been using these resources for a time, **review** their usefulness and your needs. What do you still need? Are these resources being used? Are they still the most useful ones you need? And start all over again!