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GET

DEBATING

IN YOUR
SCHOOL



EDUCATION
SERVICE



**GET
DEBATING**



**IN YOUR
SCHOOL**

Find issues for debate at your school and turn talk into positive action.

There are many ways to be involved in democratic decisions and to influence debates. Here are some suggestions for how to extend democracy and debating in school.

Choose your issues

- Focus on issues in your school which are practical, achievable and of interest to a large number of people
- Ask yourself if the issue can be stated as a clear motion for debate
- Focus on the changes that the debate might lead to and use this vision to get people involved

Survey the electorate

If you have more than one issue that is suitable for debate you can survey the school community to help you decide which one to prioritise. Try one of the following methods:

One to one canvassing

This involves talking directly to other students, asking them their views on a particular issue and noting what they say. Conduct as many of these face-to-face interviews as you can to ensure you receive a range of views.

- Have your questions prepared in advance
- Keep questions simple and clear
- Keep it short
- Make sure that you ask everyone the same questions with the same wording
- Record the results using tick boxes and/or comments



Printed (or online) surveys

Put together a series of questions on your chosen issues. Hand printed copies out or, if online, tell students where they can find it.

- Ensure that the questions are straightforward and precise
- Consider the best format for each question: YES/NO tick-box, answer on a scale of 1-10 or a space to comment
- Work out in advance how you will collect, assess and report back the responses
- Set a deadline for survey submissions

Online polls

Polls can be used quickly to get a snapshot of opinion or at the end of a debate as a form of voting.

- Ask simple YES/NO questions
- Think about the best platform for your poll (social media, polling websites, your school's website)
- Select the most appropriate method of showing the results (numerically, bar/pie chart)

Extend the debate

Good communication is essential so that anyone can get involved. You can:

- Post clear summaries of what was discussed on notice boards and school websites
- Use assemblies to bring everyone up to date with issues and progress
- Use posters, videos and audio to get key messages across
- Ask teachers if you can use lessons and any forums for discussion to explore