



School Council Tip Sheet

Encouraging Brainstorming

Brainstorming is an excellent way to encourage creative thinking. A brainstorming session brings a group of people together to participate in a free-flowing, but well-managed, discussion about problems and solutions. It promotes group decision-making and helps to build consensus among group members. Brainstorming is a powerful tool for generating new ideas and will help your School Council develop effective goals, objectives and action plans.

Start on a positive note

Every brainstorming session should have a facilitator. The facilitator's role is to draw suggestions from the group and to keep the discussion on track. Have a large sheet of poster paper, flip chart or black/white board and markers available. Write down all of the suggestions or ideas in large print, so everyone can see them.

Gather ideas

- Make sure everyone understands the topic and purpose of the discussion.
- Encourage all Council members to participate actively in the brainstorming.
- Your initial goal is to gather as many suggestions as possible. One idea may spark off another, so keep the discussion fast-paced and fun.
- Accept all suggestions, even the far-fetched ones. Don't reject or criticize any ideas – at this point, you should be open to all possibilities.
- Break into small groups to brainstorm your ideas. Give each group a time limit to make a list of suggestions. Then ask the small groups to report back to the larger group, so the ideas can be shared.

Discuss the options

When the flow of ideas slows down, it's time to start reviewing the list of suggestions.

Cross off any ideas that everyone agrees are not possible or not acceptable. Look for common themes. Group together any ideas that are similar or related. Once you have a short-list of good suggestions, start arranging them in priority order, with the best or most important ideas at the top.

Plan the next steps

Use this list to develop your goals, objectives and/or action plans. Remind the group that you developed the final plan or solution as a team and that all of you are responsible for the decisions made through the brainstorming session.

Questions?

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