



A GUIDE TO STUDENT COUNCIL  
ELECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND  
SCHOOL PERSONNEL





A GUIDE TO STUDENT COUNCIL  
ELECTIONS FOR STUDENTS AND  
SCHOOL PERSONNEL

# STUDENT COUNCIL ELECTIONS IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

**Directeur général des élections du Québec  
in cooperation with the  
Direction de l'adaptation scolaire et  
des services complémentaires (DASSC)  
of the Ministère de l'Éducation**

**Design and Development**

Daniel Côté

**Coordination**

Madeleine Beaudoin and Danielle Bouchard  
and  
Michel Leclerc  
of the Ministère de l'Éducation

**Graphic Design (logo and cover)**

Verge LeBel communication

Schools are authorized to reproduce this document, in whole or in part. If the document is to be sold, the price should not exceed the cost of production.

© Gouvernement du Québec  
Ministère de l'Éducation, 1999-99-0349

ISBN: 2-550-34677-7

Legal Deposit - Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 1999

## Foreword

The directeur général des élections du Québec, in cooperation with the Ministère de l'Éducation, is pleased to introduce this guide to the educational community. *Student Council Elections in Secondary School* is intended to assist students in charge of holding a student council election, as well as the adults working with them, and to make the experience of an election an introduction to the rules and requirements of democracy. The document reinforces and enriches the practical guide to holding an election found in *Elections for Secondary-School Students—An Introduction to the Democratic Process*,<sup>1</sup> published in 1992 by the Directeur général des élections and the Ministère de l'Éducation. It also supplements the module *The Student Council and Democracy*,<sup>2</sup> included in the ACTI-JEUNES support kit.

- 
1. Directeur général des élections and the Ministère de l'Éducation. *Elections for Secondary-School Students—An Introduction to the Democratic Process*. Québec. 1992.
  2. Ministère de l'Éducation. *The Student Council and Democracy*. Québec. 1996.

# TABLE DES MATIÈRES

<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Preparations for Student Council Elections</b> .....	3
<b>1. Roles and Responsibilities of the Student Council</b> .....	3
<b>2. Composition of a Student Council</b> .....	4
2.1 Student Association .....	4
<i>General Assembly</i> .....	4
<i>Legislative Council</i> .....	4
<i>Executive Council</i> .....	5
2.2 Presidents' Council .....	5
2.3 School Life Committee .....	5
<b>3. Election Models</b> .....	6
3.1 Class Representatives .....	6
3.2 Grade Representatives .....	6
3.3 Student Council Members .....	7
<b>4. Chief Electoral Officer</b> .....	7
<b>5. Electoral Regulations</b> .....	8
5.1 Voter Qualification .....	8
5.2 Criteria for Candidacy .....	8
5.3 Conditions for the Formation of a Political Party .....	9
5.4 Electoral Expenses of Candidates .....	9
5.5 Election Advertising .....	9
5.6 Casting of Ballots .....	9
5.7 Counting of Ballots .....	9
5.8 Recounting of Ballots .....	10
<b>6. Electoral Calendar</b> .....	10

<b>Stages of the Election Period</b> .....	15
<b>1. Calling of Elections</b> .....	15
<b>2. Production and Revision of the Voters' List</b> .....	15
<b>3. Recruitment and Teacher Supervision of Candidates</b> .....	15
<b>4. Declaration of Candidacy</b> .....	16
<b>5. Information for Voters</b> .....	16
<b>6. Recruitment and Training of Election Personnel</b> .....	17
<b>7. Preparation of Ballots and Ballot Boxes</b> .....	18
<b>Election Day</b> .....	29
<b>1. Installation of Polling Stations</b> .....	29
<b>2. Voting Procedure</b> .....	29
2.1 Polling Hours .....	29
2.2 Presence of Candidates .....	30
2.3 Voting Procedure .....	30
<b>3. Counting of Ballots</b> .....	30
<b>4. Announcement of Results</b> .....	31

## Introduction

Schools have long aimed to prepare students for life and citizenship. According to the report of the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles<sup>1</sup>, the complexity of the world in the twenty-first century will require schools to intensify their efforts in this area. Considering that young people will have to grow up in a world where economic changes threaten to accentuate inequality, the authors of the report point out that to promote democratic principles, social justice and the responsibility required of citizens is now, more than ever, one of the key purposes of the school.

The Ministère de l'Éducation, in the document *School: A Place to Grow—Organizational Framework for Student Services*<sup>2</sup>, states that since civic education requires that students early on play active, responsible social roles, it is important that the schools provide them with the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting the quality of life in the school and the organization of school activities. The student council stands as one of the means to this end, contributing to the attainment of this objective.

The Directeur général des élections hopes that this experience will lead students to discover the electoral process of Québec and stimulate their interest in applying democratic principles in their schools. He also hopes to generate an awareness in the schools of the high quality of the Québec electoral system. From the age of 18, young people have an active role to play, whether as electors, as employees in the electoral process or even as candidates for political parties. To play these parts well requires a good understanding of the electoral system and the purpose of this document is to help young people master these principles.

In particular, this document is intended for students and school personnel who wish to make the election of a student council a learning exercise in democracy and in the vitalization of school life. Part One covers the preparations for a student council election, including the roles and responsibilities of the council, its composition and different election models. It also examines the tasks of the person who assumes the role of chief electoral officer for the student council election, the electoral regulations and the electoral calendar. Part Two deals with the specific stages of the electoral period. It covers the call for elections, the production and revision of the voters' list, the recruitment and supervision of candidates, declarations of candidacy, information for voters and the recruitment and training of election personnel. Activities related to voting day, such as setting up polling stations, balloting, counting of votes and announcement of results, are included in Part Three. Since the student council is a project to be created and re-invented, according to the needs of each individual school, this guide does not include any general model to be applied in all cases.

---

1. Ministère de l'Éducation. *Preparing our Youth for the 21st Century*. Report of the Task Force on Elementary and Secondary School Learning Profiles. Québec. 1994.

2. Ministère de l'Éducation. *School: A Place to Grow—Organizational Framework for Student Services*. Québec. 1988.

Nevertheless, the guide does contain a number of indications on how to best adapt the experience to the particular character of the school and how to make the student council election part of education in democracy.

## Preparations for Student Council Elections

In order for the student council election to truly educate students in the workings of democracy, it is important to take the time to settle certain questions before the elections are called. First of all, the roles and responsibilities of the student council must be defined. It must also be decided what positions the council will consist of and how it will be elected. Finally, the tasks of the chief electoral officer must be specified, electoral regulations must be established and the electoral calendar must be prepared.

This section covers the elements to be considered before approaching any of these questions.

### 1. Roles and Responsibilities of the Student Council

To avoid disappointment and misunderstandings, it is important to define clearly the roles and responsibilities of the student council. As public consultation is one of the mainstays of a democratic system, this task could be entrusted to a committee made up of the school principal, representatives of teaching and non-teaching staff, the student council advisor, as well as students who can speak for their peers (such as members of the outgoing council). Since the mission of the council is to contribute to the improvement of quality of life in the school, and since these needs may change from one year to the next, there could be an annual review of the student council's responsibilities. Once this list of responsibilities has been revised, the

information would be communicated to school personnel and students.

The student council, unlike non-elected student committees such as those in charge of sports or the school radio station, has the right to speak for the entire student body. To ensure that the election of the council is not a purely theoretical exercise, it is important that its responsibilities justify holding elections. It should be remembered that it is not necessary to be elected to organize extracurricular activities such as parties, intramural games or activity days.

This does not mean that the council must not be allowed to organize such activities. As these are generally popular with the students, it would enhance the visibility of elected students to be involved in the organization of at least one or two important extracurricular activities—a Christmas dance, school carnival, sports day, or other event. However, the organization of such activities should not be the council's only responsibility.

As an elected body, the council has a legitimate right to speak for the students, and its responsibilities should include issues of school life that require the consensus of adults and students. The student council could thus be invited to participate in revisions of the school regulations, management of the budget allotted to extracurricular activities, development of the educational project and the improvement of student services (cafeteria, library, supervision, etc.). In schools that have numerous activity committees (graduation dance, newspaper, radio and other committees), the council could also have the responsibility of organizing an activity to recognize the contributions of those

committee members. The student council could also initiate special projects such as setting up a school fund, decorating a student lounge, or replacing equipment for the school radio station.

When the responsibilities of the student council are being established, the availability of its members and that of the council's advisor should be taken into account. The age of the young people is also a factor to be considered, as well as their understanding of democracy. It is also important that the majority of the tasks assigned to the council can be carried out before its mandate expires. Finally, it should be remembered that the sharing of leadership duties between young people and adults may be more difficult to achieve in certain cases. It may be preferable at first to exclude some aspects of school life (evaluation and improvement of teaching, supervision, etc.) from the jurisdiction of student representatives, rather than place them in a situation where it is not likely they will be listened to, or will have no real power to influence decisions.

Sheet 1.1 contains an example of the roles and responsibilities that may be conferred on a student council.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Composition of a Student Council

The size of a school generally determines the composition of a student council. In

---

1. It could be useful to adopt, where possible, the terminology of the Québec political system (prime minister, ministers, members of parliament) to familiarize students with these terms.

small schools the council is usually made up of one representative from each class in a subject such as English or personal and social development. In cases where the number of classes is too high for this model to be used effectively, other formulas may be used. Three examples of different types of student council are described below.

### 2.1 Student Association

A student association is a three-tiered structure consisting of a general assembly, a legislative council and an executive council.

#### *General Assembly*

The general assembly is composed of all students in the school and serves as their chief representational body. It has the exclusive power to modify the student association's rules of operation: composition of the executive council, election format, electoral regulations, etc.

In some schools, the executive council convenes the members of the general assembly twice a year—once at the beginning of the year to set out its priorities, and once at the end of the year to report on its activities.

#### *Legislative Council*

The legislative council is made up of one representative per class (sometimes called a delegate). This delegate ensures communication between the students and the executive council, carrying out surveys and information campaigns among the students. In some schools, the students elected to represent their class are grouped into committees or ministries responsible for

sports, festivals, environmental activities, or sociocultural events.

The legislative council usually meets once per school term. It usually has the authority to refuse or amend any project presented by the executive council and to remove members of the executive council from office.

### ***Executive Council***

The executive council, which could be called the cabinet, constitutes the student council. This is the body that officially represents students to the school administration. It defines the roles and responsibilities of all committees or ministries. It has the power to block any project issued from the legislative council.

The number of students sitting on the council varies from school to school. In some cases, there will be three: a president, a vice-president and a secretary. In other cases, a dozen students will form the council: a prime minister, a deputy prime minister, a minister for sociocultural affairs, a minister for sports, a minister of finance, etc.

Sheet 1.2 contains an example of the roles that can be assigned to an executive council.

## **2.2 Presidents' Council**

Some large schools opt for electing a student council for each grade level. The presidents of each council form a presidents' council. The president of this council may be chosen from one of its members or elected by universal suffrage.

The role of the presidents' council is to coordinate the activities of the grade councils. It can also act as a supreme council by participating in the revision of school regulations or the development and application of the rules concerning remedial activities.

## **2.3 School Life Committee**

A school life committee is made up of representatives from each grade level as well as students from various activity committees: sports, newspaper, radio, sociocultural activities, etc. Its chief mandate is to listen to students' needs and tend to school life activities.

On the basis of these three types of councils, other models can be developed. In some schools where the student association formula is used, the class representatives are not grouped into activity committees or ministries. In other schools, a general assembly is not convened. In some cases, councils are formed for each grade without forming a presidents' council. It can also be determined that no seats should be reserved for activity committee representatives and that the council should be made up exclusively of representatives from the grades.

The main thing is that the make-up of the student council be adapted to the school's particular needs and respect the basic rules of democracy.

Since the council exists to serve the needs of students, the formula adopted must take into account the characteristics of young people. Once again, age is an important factor to consider. What is appropriate for students in the second cycle may not be appropriate to

those in the first cycle. The sociocultural background of the students, which may influence their understanding of the democratic processes of our society, is another factor to be taken into consideration. An evaluation must also be made of the resources available for supervision of the elected students. It should be realized that, while the formula of grouping grade representatives or delegates into activity committees or ministries has the advantage of adding prestige to these roles, it is very demanding on resources for supervision. Where this formula is used, the role of student council advisor is usually occupied by more than one adult.

Whatever the model chosen, it is essential that the student council remain a flexible organization allowing everyone who wishes to participate in the management of school affairs the chance to do so. This means that there must be ways of utilizing the talents of defeated candidates. For example, the student council may be granted authority to appoint non-elected students to positions of responsibility in areas such as public relations, school radio, cafeteria organization, etc. Their appointments may be temporary or permanent.

Finally, it is important that the student council format evolve along with the students as they request. To this end, the composition of the student council should be revised on a yearly basis.

### **3. Election Models**

Depending on the type of council selected, one of the following elections will be held: election of class representatives, election of grade representatives or election of council

members (president, vice-president, secretary, etc.). While the procedure for electing students to represent their class is generally the same in all schools, the type of election used to elect grade representatives or council members may differ.

#### **3.1 Class Representatives**

Students are invited to run as candidates to represent their English class, or their class in some other subject. The student who obtains the most votes is declared elected. Often the runner-up is designated as an alternative representative. The election is usually held in the fall.

To motivate classes to elect a representative, schools may grant certain privileges to those classes. Classes with a representative may receive special rates for school outings or shows presented by the school, for example.

#### **3.2 Grade Representatives**

To elect grade representatives some schools make use of an electoral college. The right to vote and to run for this position is restricted to students who already represent their class. Such an election may often be held at the end of a session (or even a whole day) of training and information for the class representatives.

In other schools, grade representatives are elected by universal suffrage. All students in the grade have the right to vote. The right to run as a candidate may or may not be limited to students who represent their class.

The number of grade representatives to be elected to the council may be determined as a function of the number of students in each grade. For example, it might be decided to

elect one person to the position for every 200 students. If there are 400 students in Secondary V, then two would be elected. If there are 630 in Secondary III, then three students would be elected.

In some schools, where universal suffrage is used and where the right to run as a candidate is not restricted to class representatives, the election of grade representatives takes place in the spring. In this case, their mandate usually begins in June and ends in May of the following year.

### 3.3 Student Council Members

The election of student council members may be internal. For example, when it is composed of grade representatives (all classes of the same year), those persons may be asked to elect from among themselves a president, a vice-president, a secretary, etc.

The electoral college is another possible avenue. In that case, the right to vote and to run for one of the positions is restricted to class or grade representatives.

The method of universal suffrage may also be used. This means that all students in the school have the right to vote. The right to run as a candidate for one of the offices may or may not be restricted to the students elected to represent their class.

Finally, we may note that it is also possible to elect the president by universal suffrage and to use the electoral college to elect the other members of the council. When universal suffrage is used to elect at least one council member and where the right to run as a candidate is not restricted to class representatives, the election may be held in the spring.

The method of declaring candidacy may also vary. In some schools, students are encouraged to form different political parties and to run as a bloc. In others, students run individually for a particular office: president, vice-president or other.

The essential thing is that the model used should stimulate students to run as candidates. Since the students can show their preference for one model over another, it is important to consult them before determining the type of declaration of candidacy that will be used.

Sheet 1.3 presents a description of four election models: presidential election, presidential election with a running mate, election of an executive council and election of a political party.

## 4. Chief Electoral Officer

In order that the student council is not supervised by one adult only, the role of chief electoral officer should be taken by a different person than the one acting as advisor to the council. To show that the student council represents an occasion to reinforce the partnership between young people and the adults of the school, one or two students could be appointed to the position of deputy electoral officer.

The chief electoral officer and his or her deputies are neutral and may not display partisan opinions. Their tasks are the following:

- To determine the electoral rules and see that they are respected.
- To determine an electoral calendar.
- To recruit and train electoral personnel.

- To communicate all useful information to candidates and to students who are voting.
- To produce and revise the voters' list.
- To display or distribute the voters' list.
- To coordinate the activities of the student candidates.
- To receive the declarations of candidacy.
- To prepare the materials required for a polling station: ballot box, voting booth, ballots, etc.
- To supervise the voting process and the counting of votes.
- To announce the official results of the election.
- To receive, where applicable, the report of candidates' electoral expenses.

Note that the procedures indicated above correspond to those found in the *Québec Election Act* and that they can, of course, be adapted to the particular needs of the school.

When students are being elected to represent their class, the teachers responsible for these classes act as election officers. A student could be associated with this task, or even take on the role himself or herself, with the support of the teacher. These two persons, as representatives of the chief electoral officer, are responsible for the electoral process in their class.

## 5. Electoral Regulations

The electoral regulations, developed in cooperation with the outgoing student council, may vary depending on whether the election is of class representatives, grade representatives or student council members. Generally speaking, these regulations cover the following points.

### 5.1 Voter Qualification

First, it must be determined who has the right to vote. For the election of class representatives, this might be the students of each English class. If the election is for student council members, the right to vote might be extended to the all students in the school or (as described above) restricted to class representatives.

### 5.2 Criteria for Candidacy

Whether the election is for class representatives, grade representatives or council members, the first criterion for declaring candidacy is to be an eligible voter. In many schools, this is the only condition that candidates running for class representative must meet.

The requirements are usually higher for candidates for student council offices and grade representatives. In most cases, they are asked to have their candidate's declaration form signed by a certain number of students. In an election by universal suffrage involving the whole school, student candidates are sometimes required to collect a certain number of supporting signatures in each grade. Often the signatures of members of the teaching staff are also required.

For the positions of president and vice-president, other criteria may also be added. In some schools, each candidacy must have the approval of the principal's office. In others, they must receive the approval of a candidacy committee, usually composed of the school principal, teaching staff representatives, the student council advisor and student representatives. Students running for office may also be required to have completed their third year of secondary studies and to have marks averaging above

70 percent. They may also be asked to write a text explaining their reasons for seeking office.

### **5.3 Conditions for the Formation of a Political Party**

When students are encouraged to form political parties, it is sometimes stipulated that the parties must be made up of representatives from each grade. It may also be required that party leaders be elected by secret ballot and that the election be supervised by the chief electoral officer.

### **5.4 Electoral Expenses of Candidates**

When the election of student council members is carried out by universal suffrage, a budget may be allotted to the candidates or political parties for their electoral expenses. If this is the case, it must be indicated in the general rules how much money is allotted for this and the deadline for submitting the report on electoral expenses to the chief electoral officer.

### **5.5 Election Advertising**

Election advertising must not interfere with the normal operation of the school, nor with the normal timetable of courses, nor with the reputations of individuals. In many schools, the content, quality of English and location of posters produced by student candidates must be approved by the chief electoral officer. On voting day, all posters must be removed and no partisan advertising is allowed.

### **5.6 Casting of Ballots**

Generally, the vote to elect class representatives takes place in class, at the beginning or end of the period. Students indicate their choice of candidate by marking one of the circles on a ballot distributed to them. The ballot is secret.

In many schools, the voting for council members or grade representatives is carried out on the model of Québec elections. The polling stations are set up in a large hall (gymnasium, library or other such location) and each polling station has a deputy returning officer, a poll clerk and a representative of each candidate.

In order to vote, the student approaches the polling station at which he or she is registered and identifies himself or herself. The poll clerk checks whether the student's name is on the list and crosses it out. The deputy returning officer initials the ballot and gives it to the student. The student then proceeds to the voting booth and marks his or her choice of candidate on the ballot. The student then folds the ballot in three and deposits it in the ballot box.

### **5.7 Counting of Ballots**

The counting of the ballots in elections for class representatives is usually done by the deputy returning officer in front of the whole class. In elections for student council officials and grade representatives, the ballots are counted by the deputy returning officers from all the polling stations in the presence of the chief electoral officer and the student candidates.

### 5.8 Recounting of Ballots

Schools recognize that defeated candidates have a right to request a recount of votes. Their request must be presented in writing to the chief electoral officer within 24 hours following the official announcement of the election results.

A recount can be accepted for any candidate who alleges an illegal rejection of ballots, an incorrect tally of votes counted for each candidate or any other reasonable cause. By accepting a request for a recount, the chief electoral officer must hold the recount at the soonest convenient day. He or she must notify the candidates of the time, date and place of the recount.

The electoral calendar of the Directeur général des élections du Québec may also be obtained by writing to the address below:

Directeur général des élections du Québec  
Édifce René-Lévesque  
Centre de renseignements  
3460, rue de la Pérade  
Sainte-Foy (Québec) G1X 3Y5

Telephone: (418) 528-0422 (Québec City region)  
1 800 461-0422 (toll free)

## 6. Electoral Calendar

The electoral calendar is prepared for the students and school personnel and indicates the date, location and (if applicable) the time of the following activities:

- Calling of the elections
- Composition of the voters' list
- End of the period for declaration of candidacy
- Period for revision of the voters' list
- Election campaign
- Presentation of election speeches
- Voting day
- Official announcement of results

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL**

### **EXAMPLE**

#### **Roles of the Student Council**

1. To officially represent all the students in the school.
2. To identify and help solve problems encountered by students in the school.
3. To communicate its opinion to the school administration on any subject that concerns students and on which the council wishes to be consulted.
4. To promote and encourage the involvement of students in organizing school activities.

#### **Responsibilities of the Student Council**

1. To promote the interests of students among the school administration, staff and parents.
2. To inform students about any subject that concerns them.
3. To consult students on any issue of importance.
4. To organize financial campaigns for school life activities.
5. To participate in the process of revision of school regulations.
6. To organize the Christmas party.
7. To participate in developing the school's educational project and to promote it to students.
8. To organize an activity to recognize the efforts of students involved in organizing school activities.
9. To propose activities to the school administration that would improve the quality of life in the school.
10. To maintain good relations, out of mutual respect, with the school staff (the principal, teaching and non-teaching personnel) and parents.

## **ROLES OF THE MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL**

### **EXAMPLE**

#### **1. Prime Minister or President**

- To act as official spokesperson for the council in its relations with the students and the school administration.
- To call meetings of the council and to prepare the agendas.
- To chair, or co-chair with an adult, the meetings of the council.
- To supervise the tasks of the council members.
- To take part in all special committees formed by the council or send a representative to such committees.
- To represent the students on official occasions.

#### **2. Deputy Prime Minister or Vice-president**

- To advise and assist the prime minister or the president.
- To coordinate the work of non-elected students involved in the organization of school activities: newspaper, radio, environment, school dances, etc.
- To replace the prime minister or the president when he or she cannot be present.

#### **3. Secretary**

- To write up the minutes of every council meeting.
- To publish and distribute all the documents necessary for meetings.
- To write and classify the correspondence of the council.

#### **4. Minister of Finance or Treasurer**

- To keep accounts up to date.
- To make purchases.
- To provide full information about the council's finances whenever the council wishes to see it.

#### **5. Minister or Councilor**

- To direct the activities of the ministry or committee for which he or she is responsible.
- To represent the members of his or her ministry or committee before the executive council.

## ELECTION MODELS

Models	Elected Offices	Types of Candidacy	Types of Balloting
1. Presidential System	Council President	Candidates run individually for council president.	Universal suffrage or electoral college
2. Presidential System with Running Mate	Council President and Vice-president	Candidates form teams of two, running together for the positions of council president and vice-president.	Universal suffrage or electoral college
3. Executive Council	Each office of the council: president, vice-president, treasurer, etc.	Candidates run individually for a specific office.	Universal suffrage or electoral college
4. Political Parties	All offices of the council: president, vice-president, treasurer, etc.	Candidates form political parties and run as a bloc.	Universal suffrage

## Stages of the Election Period

The electoral period is a time of intense activities for candidates and for the chief electoral officer and his or her assistants. The duration of the period may vary depending on whether the election is for a class representative, a grade representative or a particular office on the student council. In general, the electoral calendar suggested by the Directeur général des élections du Québec, based on the *Elections Act*, is a good guide. In the case of an election by universal suffrage, the electoral period is usually two weeks.

Part Two, which follows, covers the principal stages in the period preceding voting day.

### 1. Calling of Elections

The calling of elections marks the beginning of the electoral period. Elections may be called by the outgoing council during a brief ceremony.

For the chief electoral officer and his or her assistants, this is the time when candidates make themselves familiar to their electorate of fellow students using such means as badges, posters with their photos and messages on the school radio station. This is also the time to distribute the electoral calendar and the list of responsibilities and issues that will be assigned to the next student council.

### 2. Production and Revision of the Voters' List

The voters' list is the list of students eligible to vote, according to the regulations of the school. In the case of an election for council offices this may be the list of class representatives or the list of all students in the school.

As soon as the election is called, the chief electoral officer draws up the voters' list. This is posted so that students eligible to vote can see whether their names are on the list. Only students properly registered on the voters' list can vote.

Any person eligible to vote whose name is not on the voters' list can submit a registration form to the chief electoral officer. Likewise, anyone who notices an error in the listing of their name can request a correction. Sheet 2.1 shows an example of a registration or correction form for the voters' list.

### 3. Recruitment and Teacher Supervision of Candidates

Many schools organize an information session for students wishing to run for class representative or student council office. Led jointly by the chief electoral officer and the adult acting as advisor to the student council, such a meeting enables students to make informed choices about running as a candidate. In some schools, students are invited from groups that may be reluctant to present candidates (students from cultural communities, students with learning difficulties, vocational education students and others). This invitation is a way of encouraging them to run for office.

The topics on the agenda of the information session are usually as follows:

- roles and responsibilities of the student council
- roles of the members of the student council
- electoral regulations
- the electoral calendar
- declarations of candidacy

The information session also provides an excellent opportunity to introduce and distribute a brochure to students entitled *Running in a Student Council Election*, which contains an outline for preparing an election speech and some hints on how to deliver it. Copies of the folder and the electoral calendar can be obtained from the Directeur général des élections (see address in Part One, Section 6).

The text of the folder also appears in the module *The Student Council and Democracy*, contained in the ACTI-JEUNES Student Advisor's Kit.

#### 4. Declaration of Candidacy

When an election for grade representatives or for student council offices is held by universal suffrage, those who wish to run as candidates are usually asked to fill out a form. This form must be returned to the chief electoral officer ten days before voting day, at the latest. As indicated previously, the form must usually be signed by a certain number of electors. Sheet 2.2 contains an example of a form for declaration of candidacy.

The same procedure may be used in an election for class representatives. In this

case only one or two electors' signatures would be required and students would be asked to submit their declaration of candidacy forms to their deputy returning officer, a position occupied by the teacher of the class in which the election is being held.

Another approach is for the teacher to ask students to nominate candidates. For a nomination to be valid, it must be seconded by at least two students. In this case, the teacher writes the name of the proposed candidate on the blackboard, the name of the student who nominated the candidate, and the names of the students who second the nomination. No student may play more than one of these roles.

At the end of the nomination period, the teacher asks each student whose name has been put forward whether they wish to run for the position of class representative or not. Those students who agree to run as candidates are listed on the ballot. This procedure can also be used when the election of grade representatives or student council members is done by an electoral college.

Whichever procedure for declaration of candidacy is used, a candidate can withdraw from the race by submitting a written notice to the chief electoral officer. If the candidate withdraws after the ballots have been printed and it is impossible to print new ones, the chief electoral officer must see that the candidate's name is crossed off each ballot.

#### 5. Information for Voters

Students participating in the elections should be well informed about the issues the student council will be dealing with, the

electoral regulations and the phases of the electoral calendar. The chief electoral officer may use various means to communicate this information: the school radio station, posters, visits to all classrooms, an information booth, etc.

In order that the election does not become a mere popularity contest among the candidates, it is important to educate voters on how to exercise their right to vote responsibly. The brochure *Running in a Student Council Election* has been produced for just this purpose. It discusses the role of the student council and the qualifications required of those elected to it. It may be obtained from the office of the Directeur général des élections du Québec, at the address mentioned above (see Part One, Section 6).

Considering that the preparation of voters is one of the essential conditions for electing a good student council, more and more schools are paying special attention to this. In some schools, teachers of personal and social development are asked to include educational activities in their classes to sensitize students to the importance of exercising their right to vote in a judicious way. Activities of this type are found in the ACTI-JEUNES Student Advisor's Kit in the module entitled *The Student Council and Democracy*. This document may be obtained from the ACTI-JEUNES coordinator in any regional office of the Ministère de l'Éducation.

## 6. Recruitment and Training of Election Personnel

In an election for grade representatives (for all classes of a single grade) or for student council members, the chief electoral officer must appoint:

- an officer in charge of information and order for each location in which a polling station is situated. If the polling stations are in the cafeteria or library, two such officers will be appointed;
- a deputy returning officer for each polling station;
- a poll clerk for each polling station.

These roles are to be assumed by students. When this is not possible, they can be filled by teachers or parents. Sheet 2.3 includes a description of the tasks of the officer in charge of information and order. Sheet 2.4 details the tasks of the deputy returning officer and Sheet 2.5 lists those of the poll clerk.

In an election for class representatives, the teacher responsible for that class should appoint the election personnel. In this case, the teacher will usually take the role of the officer in charge of information and order.

It goes without saying that the election personnel must carry out their functions in an impartial and non-partisan manner.

## **7. Preparation of Ballots and Ballot Boxes**

The chief electoral officer has ballots printed according to the model on Sheet 2.6.

The ballot should clearly identify each student running for office. It should list the first and last names of all candidates in alphabetical order. If two students have identical first and last names, then the first name of their father or mother may be added to distinguish them.

The chief electoral officer should set up a ballot box for every polling station. Ballot boxes and voting booths can be obtained from the Directeur général des élections du Québec at the address mentioned above (see Part One, Section 6).

Before voting day, the chief electoral officer will give each deputy returning officer a ballot box, a description of the tasks of the members of the election personnel, a voters' list, the materials required for the voting and the form for recording the results of the ballot count (see Sheet 2.7). In addition, each deputy returning officer receives an envelope containing a number of ballots equal to the number of students registered at his or her polling station, along with a number of extra ballots to compensate for any damaged ballots.

**REVISION OF VOTERS' LIST  
REQUEST FOR REGISTRATION OR CORRECTION**

Election of:

**Request for Registration**

First Name:

Last Name:

I, the undersigned, declare that I am an eligible voter.

Date:

Signature of voter:

**Request for Correction**

*Currently registered on voters' list as:*

First Name:

Last Name:

**Correction Requested**

First Name:

Last Name:

I, the undersigned, declare the above information to be truthful.

Date:

Signature of voter:

Date:

Signature of the chief electoral officer:



**DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY FORM**

I, the undersigned,

first name

last name

class

wish to run for the position of:

Date:

Signature:

We, the undersigned, as eligible voters,  
support the candidacy of:



## **TASKS OF THE OFFICER IN CHARGE OF INFORMATION AND ORDER**

The student who acts as officer in charge of information and order may not engage in partisan activities. On voting day, the tasks of this person are:

- To vote as soon as the polls open if he or she is eligible to vote.
- To greet the voters and direct them toward their polling station.
- To ensure that the polling stations are accessible and to direct the flow of traffic among them.
- To ensure that only one person at a time is admitted to a polling station.
- To ensure that only those voters present in the polling area at closing time are admitted to vote.
- To ensure that only authorized persons are present in a polling station.
- To notify the chief electoral officer immediately of any situation that requires his or her attention.

## TASKS OF THE DEPUTY RETURNING OFFICER

Students who act as deputy returning officers must not display partisan opinions in the performance of their functions. On voting day, the deputy returning officer is required:

- To set up the polling station (see list of required materials on Sheet 2.8).
- To post the instructions for voters in the voting booth, facing the voter (see Sheet 2.9).
- To seal the ballot box after verifying that the box is empty.
- To vote as soon as the polls open if he or she is qualified to vote.
- To initial the back of each ballot paper, fold it in thirds and give it to the voter who has identified himself or herself to the poll clerk. If a voter accidentally spoils a ballot paper, the deputy returning officer must provide him or her with another in exchange.
- To ask the voter to deposit his or her ballot paper in the ballot box after having voted in the voting booth.
- To close the polling station at the time indicated by the chief electoral officer.
- To open the ballot box and count the ballot papers in the presence of the poll clerk.
- To sort into separate envelopes:
  - *the valid ballots for each candidate*
  - *the ballots rejected during the ballot counting*
  - *the damaged or spoiled ballots*
- To fill in the form, Result of Ballot Count (see Sheet 2.7)
- To notify the chief electoral officer of the results of the vote and hand over the envelopes, the voters' list, the Results of Vote Count form and the ballot box.

## TASKS OF THE POLL CLERK

The student who acts as poll clerk cannot engage in partisan activities in the course of his or her duties. On election day, the tasks of the poll clerk are:

- To help with setting up the polling station.
- To vote as soon as the polls open if he or she is eligible to vote.
- To cross off the voters' list the names of students who arrive at the polling station to vote.
- To help with the counting of the votes by keeping track of the number of votes received by each candidate while the deputy returning officer counts the ballots.

**BALLOTS**

## RESULT OF BALLOT COUNT

Election of:

Polling Station

Total number of students

Number of students who voted

Percentage of vote exercised

Ballots received from the chief electoral officer

1. Ballots valid for each candidate

Total valid ballots

2. Damaged or spoiled ballots

3. Unused ballots

4. Ballots rejected during ballot count

(Boxes a and b must be identical.)

TOTAL

(Add columns 1, 2, 3 and 4.)

Date:

Signature of deputy returning officer

## MATERIALS REQUIRED FOR A POLLING STATION

The following materials must be available at each polling station:

- a table and two chairs for the electoral personnel
- a ballot box placed on the table of the electoral personnel
- the voters' list, on which the poll clerk indicates who has voted
- a pencil for the deputy returning officer and one for the poll clerk
- ballots with the names of candidates printed on them
- a voting booth
- a table on which to set the voting booth
- instructions for voters (see Sheet 2.9) posted in the voting booth, in front of the voter
- a pencil placed in the voting booth for the voters

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR VOTERS

*MARK ONE CIRCLE ONLY*

*Fold your ballot to ensure the secrecy of your vote.*

*N.B. These instructions must be posted in the voting booth.*

## Election Day

In democratic societies, citizens enjoy the invaluable right to vote. It is one of the most important symbols of the population's participation in public affairs. In our country the right to vote is protected by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* and the *Québec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms*.

Because it is so important, the right to vote cannot be exercised indiscriminately. On election day, a specific procedure must be followed.

From an educational standpoint, the procedure to be followed in an election by universal suffrage for student council office or grade representative should be substantially the same as that for Québec elections.

### 1. Installation of Polling Stations

The chief electoral officer determines the number of polling stations to be set up for the election. The exact procedure may vary from one school to another. Some have one polling station per grade (for each group of classes of the same year). Others choose to divide the school population into sections of 200, for example, and set up a polling station for each such group (riding).

It would be preferable to install the polling stations in a location easy to access and to make sure that handicapped persons can reach them easily. This location must be clearly marked. Sheet 3.1 contains a model

for setting up a location for the polling stations.

The electoral personnel must arrive at the time stipulated by the chief electoral officer to set up the polling stations. When the polling station is opened, the deputy returning officer and the poll clerk must make sure that the ballot box does not contain any ballots. The box is then sealed and placed on the table of the polling station in clear view of the electoral personnel.

## 2. Voting Procedure

### 2.1 Polling Hours

In schools, the vote takes place during class hours. Students are called by class according to a schedule determined by the chief electoral officer. This is a formula where exercising the right to vote is in some sense compulsory.

Other schools use a system similar to that used in Québec elections, which has the advantage of sensitizing young people through experience to the Québec electoral system. The voting takes place outside of classroom hours, generally at lunch time, which is sometimes extended for the purpose. The decision to exercise one's right to vote or not is left entirely to the voters. This method, perhaps because it emphasizes individual responsibility, often leads students to vote in a more serious and thoughtful manner.

When the voting does not take place in class time, the chief electoral officer must inform students of the opening and closing times of the polling stations. If, due to extraordinary circumstances, the polling stations cannot

open at the appointed time or if they are interrupted because of a shortage of ballots, for example, the time lost must be made up until the polling station has been open for the length of time originally planned. Voters present at a polling station at the time specified for the closure of the polls, and who have not yet voted, may do so. The deputy returning officer then declares the polling station to be closed.

## 2.2 Presence of Candidates

Candidates may remain at the polling station for the entire voting period. Furthermore, these students can designate a person to represent them at each polling station. Each of these persons must carry a candidate's representative permit, signed by his or her candidate (see Sheet 3.2).

Sheet 3.3 contains a description of the tasks of the representative.

## 2.3 Voting Procedure

Only one voter may be admitted to each polling station at a time. When the student arrives at the polling station, he or she presents his or her identity card issued by the school. The poll clerk checks whether the student's name appears on the voters' list and, if it is there, crosses it out.

After initialing the back of the ballot, the deputy returning officer hands the ballot to the student admitted to vote. The student then goes to the voting booth, marks the ballot by shading in a single circle using a pen or pencil, and folds it. He or she then allows the deputy returning officer, the poll clerk or the candidate's representative to examine the initials of the deputy returning officer on the ballot. Then, in view of all

those present, the student who has voted deposits his or her ballot personally into the ballot box.

When a ballot has been damaged or spoiled accidentally, the deputy returning officer asks the student to shade in all of the circles. The deputy returning officer then invalidates this ballot and gives the student a new one.

Voting is by secret ballot. At the polling station, voters cannot reveal in any way the name of the candidate for whom they are voting or have voted. Nor can the personnel of the polling station, the candidates or their representatives seek to find out from a voter for whom they intend to vote or have voted. A person cannot be pressed to divulge for whom they

## 3. Counting of Ballots

After the polls are closed, the deputy returning officer, with the help of the poll clerk, proceeds to count the ballots. The candidates and their representatives can remain to witness this.

The deputy returning officer opens the ballot box, and counts the ballots by taking each of the ballots from the box, one at a time, and allowing each person present to examine them. He or she declares each ballot valid if it has been marked according to the instructions to shade in one circle only of the ballot. The deputy returning officer can reject any ballot that:

- was not supplied by himself or herself
- does not bear his or her initials
- has not been marked
- has been marked in favour of more than one candidate
- has been marked elsewhere on the ballot than in one of the circles

- has been marked with senseless or insulting comments
- carries a mark allowing the voter to be identified

After counting the ballots and filling out a Result of Ballot Count form (see Sheet 2.7), the deputy returning officer places into separate envelopes the ballots for each candidate, the rejected ballots and the damaged or spoiled ballots. These envelopes are sealed and the deputy returning officer, the poll clerk and the representatives who so wish write their names on each envelope. The deputy returning officer then turns in the envelopes, the Result of Ballot Count form, the voters' list and the ballot box to the chief electoral officer.

#### **4. Announcement of Results**

The official announcement of election results is made by the chief electoral officer. In schools, the results are first announced to the candidates. The announcement is made at a meeting where students who have run for office are invited to evaluate their experience and where they are notified of the means available for using the talents of those who were not elected.

In the case of a tie, the chief electoral officer informs voters of the new period for declaring candidacies and the new date for the election.

## A POLLING STATION

SECONDARY IV  
ELECTORAL DIVISION

SECONDARY V  
ELECTORAL DIVISION

1. A voter arriving to vote
2. Officer in charge of information and order
3. Deputy returning officer
4. Poll clerk
5. Candidate or party representatives
6. Ballot box
7. Voters' list
8. Ballot papers
9. Voting booth in which is posted the "Instructions for Voters"

**CERTIFICATE TO REPRESENT CANDIDATE**

I, the undersigned,

\_\_\_\_\_

as candidate for the position of:

\_\_\_\_\_ hereby authorize

\_\_\_\_\_

as my official representative at polling station number \_\_\_\_\_

during the casting of ballots and the counting of ballots.

Date

Signature of Candidate



## TASKS OF THE CANDIDATE'S REPRESENTATIVE

The student who acts as a candidate's representative has a partisan function. On the day of the election, his or her tasks are:

- To vote.
- To represent his or her candidate at the polling station.
- To ensure that the voting procedure is being followed correctly.
- To observe the counting of the ballots without making any comment.
- To note down his or her observations and report to his or her candidate.
- To acknowledge the results of the vote.

