

HOT SPOTS

Your Challenge

Your aim is learning about finding problems around the school. For example, your project team might find out that there are serious **dangers** caused by parents dropping off and picking up their children around the school or that most **bullying** happens on the bottom oval. You will make a report about the problems at school and present it to the principal/head at a staff meeting,

You must make all the decisions and do the work yourselves. **You** must make sure that your teacher doesn't help you too much. If you want to change the project, talk to your teacher.

Before starting the team must list 7 things that might cause big problems if you are not careful. These things we will call **alarm bells**.

Your team has 15 hours over the next four weeks.

The Project

There are four main parts of the project

- 1) Preparing to find the information
- 2) Finding the information
- 3) Making a report
- 4) Presenting the information

Preparation

Make a list of the types of possible problems to look out for such as

- fights
- long queues at the canteen
- lack of things to do

Look for other problems. For example *why are students late for school?*

Investigation

It will help to find out where the problems are happening. Draw a map of the school, buildings and playground. Place an X on the map every time one of the problems happens.

You should also describe what you see and interview people to find out more about why things are happening and how to fix them.

Also check if there are differences relating to

- girls and boys
- younger and older students
- times, eg before school

Rate how serious problems are eg from one to ten.

Report

Your report should have

- a summary of the things you have found out
- a list of recommendations about how to improve things

You should include facts and figures such as how many times certain things happened. Diagrams and graphs could also be used.

You must give the principal/head, your teacher and three other teachers a copy of the report.

Presentation

Your presentation is important. You will have found out some very important things and your principal/head and teachers will be pleased to hear about them. But you must convince them to fix things. (See handout).

Don't see the presentation as a test.

Your Resources

Your project team has the following resources

- \$50 (£20) for refreshments and reproduction of the report
- One disposable camera

- An audio cassette recorder
- Two hours free advice from the principal/head

Rules

If people ask what you are doing, you should tell them.

You must tell people that their names and *personal details* will not be used in any way. Find out what *anonymity* means.

At the end you must provide a written account of how you spent the money – along with receipts. Return all unspent money.

The team will make a **time-log**. The team will use the log to record what it did, when, and for how long.

If the project doesn't go too well, you might have to fill out a form and meet with your teacher to explain why.

Tips

Making up blank forms to record problems will be helpful. Have a look at the handout called Problem Record (page 143). It may give you some ideas. **But** it is an example. If you think you could use this type of record, make your own form.

Make your graphics colourful and easy to follow.

Make your presentation to staff fun and interesting. For example

- allow time for people to ask questions
- don't just *talk at* them
- use the term 'data'
- provide light refreshments

Even try acting out some of the incidents.

'Contract' another class to organise the refreshments for the presentation.

Provide each staff member with a personal written invitation to the presentation.

If you can, use PowerPoint for the presentation.

Plan how you are going to use the camera. Don't just start taking shots.

Come up with a good name and logo.

Your Assessment

- **You** will rate your own performance
- Your **team** mates will rate your contribution
- The **principal/head** will rate the value of the report
- Your **teacher** will rate your team's performance and success.

Your teacher will give you **your** final result

Sample

Teacher notes

The Focus

Besides problem solving, there are learning opportunities with

- data collection and analysis
- planning and organising
- communication

In addition there are rich opportunities for developing a sense of community and **citizenship**.

The whole undertaking enhances the sense of *it is 'my' school*.

Recommendations

The principal/head should take a **very positive** attitude to the students at the presentation. Perhaps it is good idea to chat with the principal/head to find at least one area where change could come about as a result of the students' project. Certainly the principal/head and others should not see the presentation as a 'test'. They should bear in mind that the children are trying to help the school. Nevertheless, patronisation should be avoided.

It may be possible for the school to resource the student project to take the lead role in implementing viable recommendations or undertaking further investigations.

Consider giving the students **Your Presentation** handout page 70 or a version.

Given circumstances, it may be necessary to focus on issues relating to bus timetabling or other areas where organisation needs improving and problems can be solved.

Ensure **anonymity** where necessary.

Encourage the team to rehearse their **presentation**. Be careful here because the temptation to over-influence is great i.e. putting the *best foot forward* syndrome.

Monitor to ensure that the students fully understand that the Problem Record is only an example to give them some ideas.

Review and Reflection

Along with the *'I Think'* handout, strategies below can stimulate Review and Reflection during and after the project. Brief descriptions, along with handouts can be found in Appendix A.



My Weekly Log



My Rating



My experience



Our teacher



**What happened?
(Post-mortem)**



Presentation



Alarm Bells



**You and I
(co-assessing)**



The truth

Involve **staff** and others in debrief, especially non teaching members of staff.

Handout – I Think

I Think

1. We have made the school a better place

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

2. Older boys cause most of the problems

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

3. There is not much bullying in the school

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

4. Students are better at identifying problems than teachers

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

5. We tried to do too much.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

6. Our teacher gave us too much help.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

7. We were organised.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

8. It was fun

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree