

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2001

PROMOTING YOUNG PEOPLE AS ACTIVE CITIZENS

Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to ask Members of the Education Committee to approve proposals which will enhance the current involvement of children and young people in decision making and active citizenship.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Education for Citizenship in Scotland is a major initiative, involving schools, pre-school centres, education departments in local authorities and a wide range of other organisations, with consultation recently undertaken separately by Learning and Teaching Scotland and Community Learning Scotland.
- 2.2** East Ayrshire Council's Department of Educational and Social Services is fully committed to the values and aims of this initiative, and, outwith its extensive school's programme of pupil involvement has participated fully in Learning and Teaching Scotland's "Youth Consultation" and a major conference "Active Citizenship", organised by Community Learning Scotland.
- 2.3** In addition, the department through the work of Support to Communities, offers a range of community based initiatives to young people which supports their involvement in their local community. An annual Youth Conference is planned and managed by young people in East Ayrshire supported by community workers. Topics considered this year included Social Justice, Amnesty International, Health, Equality Issues, The Scottish Parliament and Young People and a Young People's Charter.
- 2.4** Based on consultation with young people, the Children's Services Plan has one of its overall aims to ensure children and young people increasingly have a voice in the issues which affect them.

3. REPORT

- 3.1** The context for development of both education for citizenship and promoting active citizenship is:
- a high level of participation of young people in everyday decision making and activities

- well managed learning and teaching within specific curricular areas or subjects
- good provision of cross-curricular experiences such as environmental projects, community projects or enterprise activities
- involvement of young people in service planning
- continuing support for young people in the Scottish Youth Parliament.

4. PROGRESS SO FAR

4.1 Members will recall that on a number of occasions reports have been presented to Committee that describe the ways that schools promote participation amongst young people in the decisions that affect them. It is already common practice for secondary, primary and special schools to have Pupil or Student Councils. Additionally, it is common practice in schools to have wide consultations on specific matters of importance. Such matters include:

- the context of personal and social education (PSE) programmes
- school uniform
- school discipline
- school ethos

4.2 Within the curriculum subjects such as modern studies, social and vocational skills, and religious and moral education have promote such active participation in decision making. Additionally, where residential experiences, work experience or enterprise activity are provided it has long been the practice to encourage active decision making. Structured activities in the primary school traditionally offer children opportunities to choose experiences.

4.3 It is also part of the hidden curriculum of schools that such aims are promoted. Therefore, where school teams, school clubs or other extra-curricular activities are in place it is usual, indeed essential, that young people are consulted on key decisions. Such decisions would include the nature of activities, when and where they are provided, team tactics, shared values and so-on.

4.4 In nursery establishments, Circle Time has over the last two years become well-established as a means of involving the very young in decision making.

4.5 Youth Forums currently exist in different parts of the Authority and are at different stages of development. Over a period of recent months focus groups of young people have been meeting to hear there views about the information they want and the potential role for Youth Forums.

5. THE WAY FORWARD

- 5.1 Representatives of Student Councils will be invited to sit on local Youth Forums which will address wider issues than the school community. The development of Youth Forums and their wider role within the community will be subject to a separate council report.
- 5.2 It is proposed that representatives of the Student Councils meet with the Chair and Vice Chair of Education Committee on a bi-annual basis to discuss issues of importance. These issues, where appropriate, will feed into other arrangements being considered as part of a set of proposals to enhance children and young people's involvement in the wider planning of Council services.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 These proposals can be met within existing resources.

7. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The aim of further developing the involvement of children and young people in decision making is consistent with the Children's Service Plan and the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:
- (i) approve the proposals set out in section 5; and
 - (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

21 August 2001
AJ/KG/SB

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Education for Citizenship in Scotland: A Paper for Discussion and Consultation (Learning and Teaching Scotland).
2. Building and Active Democracy: A Discussion paper on the Role of Community Education in Supporting Active Citizenship (Community Learning Scotland).
3. Report to Education Committee 29 May – Annual Youth Conference.

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104 or Graham Short, Head of Schools, Tel: (01563) 576089.

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AGENDA