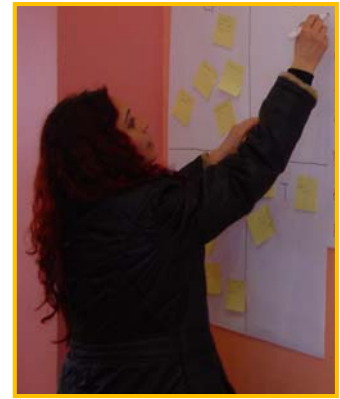

HOW TO USE THE TECHNIQUE OF 'DOTMOCRACY' FOR RANKING AND PRIORITISATION



INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE:

“Dotmocracy” is a very simple, but nevertheless effective prioritisation technique. It is good for ranking problems in order of importance. It is also good for prioritising a list of possible solutions or future project interventions (such as activities).

The word “Dotmocracy” is a play on the word “Democracy”. With “Democracy” we usually think of “one person, one vote”. “Dotmocracy” is rather like this. It is simply a way of voting by placing a “dot” against a chosen item. However, for practical purposes, with “Dotmocracy”, it often works better if each person is given several dots (several votes) to place – as will be described below.

AN EXPLANATION OF THE TECHNIQUE, USING A WORKED EXAMPLE:

In the worked example described below, as part of a school development planning exercise, the staff of the school have decided that they would like to focus on improving contacts with parents. They identify the following as possible activities:

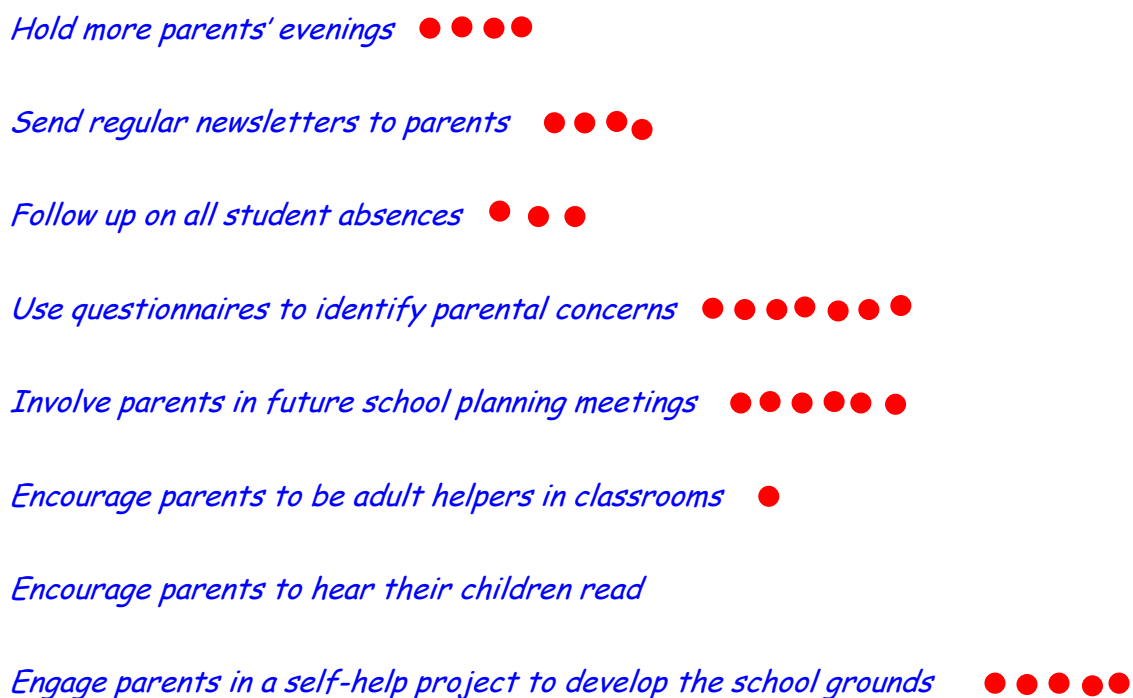
- Hold more parents’ evenings
- Send regular newsletters to parents
- Follow up on all student absences
- Use questionnaires to identify parental concerns
- Involve parents in future school planning meetings
- Encourage parents to be adult helpers in classrooms
- Encourage parents to hear their children read
- Engage parents in a self-help project to develop the school grounds

There are ten staff in the school. At a staff meeting, to conduct a prioritisation exercise using dotmocracy, it is agreed that each staff member will have three votes. The list of options is written up on a piece of flipchart paper. With a marker pen, each staff member places one dot against

each of the three options that he or she would personally choose: if there was only enough time, money, and resources to focus on three things only. (Thus, three dots in total will be placed by each person). In making choices each staff member should consider: which options do they believe would have the biggest impact in improving relationships with parents; which would be most cost-effective; and which have the greatest prospects of being successful (i.e. being achievable within the means of the school). In other words, taking all of the factors into consideration, on balance, which three options does each staff member think will bring about the greatest desired result?

After all participants have cast their three votes, outcomes might look something like as shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Example Outcomes of a Dotmocracy Voting Exercise



The tallied results in this worked example are as follows.

“Use questionnaires to identify parental concerns” came first, being voted for 7 times.

“Involve parents in future school planning meetings” came second, being voted for 6 times.

“Engage parents in a self-help project to develop the school grounds” came third, being voted for 5 times.

“Hold more parents’ evenings” came fourth, being voted for 4 times.

Etc.

Results of the Dotmocracy exercise lead to the following kinds of conclusion:

If there was only enough time, money and resources to support one activity area, the majority view of stakeholders points towards the activity “Use questionnaires to identify parental concerns” as having the potential for most impact.

If there was enough time, money and resources to support two activity areas, the majority view of stakeholders points towards the two activities “Use questionnaires to identify parental concerns” and “Involve parents in future school planning meetings” as having the potential for most impact.

If there was enough time, money and resources to support three activity areas, the majority view of stakeholders points towards the three activities “Use questionnaires to identify parental concerns”; “Involve parents in future school planning meetings”; and “Engage parents in a self-help project to develop the school grounds” as having the potential for most impact.

And so on.

Please note, this is a fictitious example for illustrative purposes. No conclusions should be inferred about real life priorities by the results shown here.

It is not strictly necessary to give each person three votes. Two votes each, four votes each, or five votes each would also work well.

