Guidance on running an MSPs in Schools session

Here are just a few ideas for topics that classes could talk about or deal with under MSPs in Schools. **They are all devolved issues.** If you have a different topic in mind, you can call the Scottish Parliament’s Outreach Service to find out if it is devolved.

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<tr>
<th>Environment</th>
<th>Economy</th>
<th>Law and Order</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Housing</th>
<th>The Arts</th>
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<td>Renewable energy</td>
<td>Domestic Fair Trade – buying local produce</td>
<td>Anti-social behaviour</td>
<td>Racism and sectarianism in football</td>
<td>Poor housing in Scotland</td>
<td>Making films in Scotland</td>
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<td>Pollution</td>
<td>Educating young people in enterprise</td>
<td>Violent crime</td>
<td>Investing in sport</td>
<td>Affordable housing</td>
<td>Supporting Scottish popular music</td>
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<td>Litter</td>
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<td>Police and teenagers</td>
<td>Local sports facilities</td>
<td>Building on greenbelt land</td>
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<td>Tax on plastic carrier bags</td>
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<td>Should Scotland bid to host international sporting events?</td>
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<td>What should be in museums?</td>
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<td>Tax on chewing gum</td>
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<td>Animal welfare</td>
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This is only a sample. These issues can be dealt with on a local level, or from a national perspective. The outcomes from these topics can be varied, depending on the subject area, curriculum level, resources available and skills being developed.
Suggestions for methods and projects

Please note that MSPs will need to be informed in advance if you wish them to provide particular advice, support or involvement in the activity or project. Advance warning will make it easier for them to prepare for the session, and improve the learning experience for the students.

Individual learning

- Online / library research, to produce an individual essay or presentation on a topic
- This could also lead to functional writing, in the form of a real or imagined letter to an MSP or a minister in the Scottish Executive
- A newspaper article
  - an in-depth investigative feature on an issue, involving objective research and opinion from MSPs and others
  - an ‘opinion’ or ‘comment’ piece
  - a report on the MSPs’ visit to the school

Group activity

- Group discussion
- Group project, delegating specific research areas to members of the group
- Groups assigned opposing viewpoints to prepare for a presentation

Class activities

- Peer education
  - producing publicity/ information materials for display around school
  - holding peer education events for other classes
- Display for citizenship day/ parents’ evening
- Petition for the Scottish Parliament
  - researching the issue
  - writing the proposal
- Whole class debate
- Mock election / referendum (class or school)
- Class newspaper / magazine, including
  - an in-depth investigative feature on an issue, involving objective research and opinion from MSPs and others
  - an ‘opinion’ or ‘comment’ piece
  - interviews with the MSPs on the chosen issue
  - Letters to the Editor (real or imagined)
  - articles on campaign groups associated with the issue
- Art project looking at the Scottish Parliament building: shapes; materials; architecture; artworks. This could be followed up in discussing the building with MSPs – perhaps interviewing them about it for a video presentation.
Ideas for working with MSPs

- Improvised drama based around a constituency surgery: MSPs could play themselves

- Dramatic performance of a parliamentary debate
- ‘Parliamentary’ debate, with students researching party positions. Some time during the MSP session could be spent with ‘party’ groups meeting the MSP for their party to discuss the questions they could ask.
- Drama based on a meeting between some MSPs and a group of protestors outside the parliament
- Campaign: ask MSPs for advice on researching, designing and running effective campaigns
- ‘Question Time’ session with one student as interviewer and other students researching issues and posing questions
- Discussion with MSPs on improving healthy eating in Scotland. Perhaps also ask MSPs for their favourite healthy recipe. The class/school could produce a cookbook, and/ or invite MSPs back for a ‘healthy eating’ lunch. This could be integrated into coursework for Home Economics/ Health and Food Technology or Hospitality courses
- Imaginative writing (perhaps as a diary entry) of a week in the life of a fictional MSP. This could be written either BEFORE the MSPs’ visit, and then compared with the reality, or AFTER, as a result of discussions with MSPs about their activities
- ‘Public meeting’ on a chosen topic, with students developing roles to portray at the meeting, and MSPs as the panel

If the class have photographs, reports, newspapers or other physical evidence of their project that they would like to let us know about, we would be very happy to receive a copy of it. We aim to hold a small exhibition of pupils’ work on the MSPs in Schools project in 2008/09 late in the academic term. The exhibition would be held within the Scottish Parliament, to raise awareness of the programme, and also profiled at citizenship conferences around Scotland.