

Curriculum

Introduction into elections for students aged 12 to 16 years

Case: Election of one class member to the assembly of class representatives of your school

Patrick Trees, MA / MAS Executive Master in Public Administration
Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland

Isabelle Bichsel, MA
High school professor for civic education and Italian language, Highschool
Biel-Bienne, Switzerland

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Table of content

1	Introduction	3
1.1	What are democratic elections all about?	3
1.2	The present case you are working with	3
1.3	What are the main points of the three lessons?	3
2	Background information for the teacher	4
2.1	How to prepare yourself and the three lessons:	4
2.2	What you should have at hand	4
2.3	Organisation of your class	4
3	General theoretical input by the teacher	5
3.1	What is a democracy all about?	5
3.2	What are the different ways of decision making in democracy?	5
3.3	What are the different steps in the election process?	5
4	Practical input by the teacher	6
4.1	Why is campaigning by the candidates so important?	6
4.2	What is the role of the media?	6
4.3	Why is the election committee so important?	6
4.4	What is the function of the polling station committee?	6
4.5	What is the role of the electorate?	6
5	Phases of the lessons	7
5.1	Lesson 1: 45 minutes	7
5.2	Lesson 2: 45 minutes	8
5.3	Lesson 3: 45 minutes	9

Annexes

Annexe 1: Exercise sheet for candidateS	11
Annexe 2: Exercise sheet for journalists	12
Annexe 3: Exercise sheet for the members of the election committee	13
Annexe 4: Exercise sheet for the members of the polling station committee	14
Annexe 5: Layout of the polling station	15
Annexe 6: Voters list / list to counter check with the registration cards	16
Annexe 7: Voters registration card	17
Annexe 8: Ballot paper	18
Annexe 9: Counting sheet for the polling station committee	19
Annexe 10: Election protocol	20

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

1 Introduction

1.1 What are democratic elections all about?

With the present curriculum your students are introduced in theory and practice to the democratic election process with its different stages. The curriculum covers three lessons, each 45 minutes long. You will find all necessary information and documentation within this paper.

The curriculum is a mix of theoretical inputs from your side and practical role play by your students. The aim is to show your students how democratic elections work and that they can take place not only to elect a government and parliament at national, regional or town level, but also at their own school.

Your students are to get know the very **importance of elections** and the values implied and they should understand that **democracy matters** and that **their vote counts**.

Fair and **free elections** must be considered **the essence and base of democracy**. Democracy without elections is not possible. Undemocratic elections are worthless. What they are going to learn during the coming lessons will give them a better understanding of the importance of elections and democracy. Be it in the present assumed case of the elections at your school or later on as adults electing parliaments and governments on local, regional or national level.

1.2 The present case you are working with

The assumption is that your school has encountered cases of violence and drug abuse and wants to tackle them!

Imagine that your school recently encountered some cases of violence and drug abuse amongst students. To tackle these problems the school directorate wants to create an assembly of class representatives to discuss these incidents and to jointly, together with the assembly develop and introduce measures to prevent them.

Each class is therefor asked to elect one representative to represent its respective class at the assembly. Your students have the elect the class mate that they think would represent her or him best and matches his ideals.

The assembly of class representatives acts as a partner with the direction of the school, brings in its own ideas and transmits the decisions to its respective classes. In many countries such assemblies exist and they have in some cases statutory rights.

1.3 What are the main points of the three lessons?

The first lesson is meant as a repetition of the basic elements of a democratic election. Your students should already have a basic understanding of the election process. You will then assign a specific function to every student. You find all necessary information on the forthcoming pages.

In the second lesson your students prepare the election itself according to their function assigned. For every function you will find an exercise sheet below.

The third lesson is "Election Day". Our students will now elect their representative to the assembly of class representatives. After the election you will have some time to review the whole process and to discuss with your students.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

2 Background information for the teacher

2.1 How to prepare yourself and the three lessons:

The curriculum is meant for students in the age group from 12 to 16 years.

The class should have between 20 to 25 students.

The example is limited to the system of **majority vote** (single winner voting system) as opposed to the system of proportional election (proportional representation). You can discuss proportional elections with your students to deepen the knowledge on elections later on in some additional lesson.

2.2 What you should have at hand

You should have the following items at hand:

- class list of all students in your class
- paper sheets to produce ballot papers and electors legitimization cards etc.
- cardboard box / plastic box for the ballot box with a slid
- cardboard or box for the voting booth to guarantee the election secrecy
- scissors
- if possible copies of newspapers discussing forthcoming elections in your country and examples of the campaign of candidates

2.3 Organisation of your class

To facilitate your work and to gain some time you designate each of your students to a specific function. For each function you will find an exercise sheet below explaining to your students what their function consist in and how to prepare themselves.

- 5 of your students will be candidates, mix evenly between girls and boys (exercise sheet for candidates),
- 5 will be journalists (exercise sheet for journalists),
- 5 will be members of the election committee (exercise sheet for members of the election committee) and
- 5 students will be members of the polling station committee (exercise sheet for the polling station committee).

If you have more than 20 students distribute them evenly to the different functions. Leave the number of candidates with 5.

3 General theoretical input by the teacher

3.1 What is a democracy all about?

You might find additional input in your text books or on the Internet (Wikipedia).

- **Democracy** is an **egalitarian form of decision making** and government.
- The **citizens** (meeting certain qualifications) have the **right to elect** its political authorities, to determine policy, the laws and the action of the state.
- Every **citizen** (meeting certain criteria) has the **right to be elected** into any political function.
- **Elections have to be free and fair**. The elections are the **expression of the free will** of the citizen. Any kind of pressure by the authorities or anybody else to influence the citizen in his choice is not allowed. The secret of election has to be guaranteed.
- The **civil liberties**, for example habeas corpus (prohibition of torture), equal rights, the freedom of speech and freedom of association, as well as due process of law have to be established and guaranteed for all citizens.
- The **separation of powers** must be guaranteed. No one authority is to exercise all powers. Power is shared between **parliament** (law making body), **government** (executive body) and the **judiciary** (interpretation and application of the law).
- The **media** is considered as the fourth power and **has to be free and independent** from any authority or single person. They have to have the opportunity to inform unrestricted and unbiased.
- Democracy is based on the decision of the majority of its citizens.

3.2 What are the different ways of decision making in democracy?

- Elections and vote on issues. In our example we concentrate on elections.
- There are different ways to determine the majority and will of the citizens. **Single majority** (highest score is the winner), qualified majority (half of the votes plus one), quorum (any fixed percentage of votes, for example a minimum of 50%) or proportional representation. In our case we use the single majority system.
- Advantage of the majority election system (or single winner voting system): is very common in English speaking countries like the USA, Great Britain or India. It is easily understandable and guarantees in most cases the fair expression of the will of the citizens. It leads to clear cut results and helps gaining majorities in parliaments.
- Disadvantage of the majority election system: The wishes and will of minorities is not taken into account. Provisions for the protection of minorities have to be implemented.

3.3 What are the different steps in the election process?

- Fixing of an election (usually by parliament, government or the president, according to the constitution and the law).
- Designation / election of candidates (usually by parties).
- Fixing of a campaign issue (usually by parties) for the upcoming election.
- Campaign of the candidates / media coverage.
- Candidates registration and validation.
- Voters registration and validation of the electors lists.
- Election Day and opening of the polling stations.
- Electors casting their ballot.
- Counting and announcing of the results.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

4 Practical input by the teacher

Based on the different functions assigned to your students in the role play they get to understand the process of elections and its importance for democracy. By preparing the Election Day they will develop the answers to the following questions.

4.1 Why is campaigning by the candidates so important?

In the campaign the candidates will tell the electorate what they stand for, what goals they want to achieve and what issues are important to them (election program). In our case they will have to address how they want to tackle violence and drug abuse at their school.

The candidates have to attract attention from the voters to be elected. They will have to find a telling slogan and concentrate on key issues and make gross statements! They can't be taken responsible for what they promise the electors.

4.2 What is the role of the media?

Professional and free media has a very important mission. They will transmit the candidate's election programs, comment them and make comparisons. They can for example organize TV or radio debates amongst the candidates. Professional media will also comment on the track record of candidates or make any wrongdoings in the past public. After the media debate, the elector should have a better overall picture of all the candidates, their strengths and weaknesses.

4.3 Why is the election committee so important?

The election committee has to guarantee fair and free elections. It is very important that the election committee's work is professional, unbiased and free from any influence by government, party or other group within the society. It is there for not uncommon to elect the election committee to give it a high degree of independence and neutrality.

The election committee will rule what persons can stand as candidates, establish the elector's lists, compile and announce the results of the elections. If any irregularities in the election process occur, the election committee has to be informed and will take appropriate measures.

4.4 What is the function of the polling station committee?

The polling station committee is in charge of the elections process at the polling station. Usually it is responsible to the election committee and controlled by it. In many cases also the polling station committee is elected or parties designate its members.

They organize the polling station at Election Day, check the voters against the voters lists and guarantee fair and free election process. They will compile the result of their polling station and announce it to the election committee. They will have to announce any observed irregularities to the election committee.

4.5 What is the role of the electorate?

The elector wants to express his choice in electing the candidate she or he considers to best represent her or him. The elector also wants to be sure of a fair and free election guaranteed by the election committee, the polling station committee and observed by critical and free media.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

5 Phases of the lessons

5.1 Lesson 1: 45 minutes

30 minutes

You explain to and discuss with your students the basic elements of democracy and elections according to the above text "General theoretical input by the teacher". This should be a repetition for your students with the scope of deepening their understanding.

- The importance of elections in democracy.
- Majority election system (opposed to proportional elections).
- Explain the different phases and steps in the election process (see above "What are the different steps in the election process?") and the different functions candidates, the media, the election committee and the polling station committee (see text above "Specific input by the teacher based on the different functions assigned to your students in the role play")
- Discuss cases of violence and drug abuse that occurred or might occur at your school as background for the election and campaigning. Each class will elect one representative to the assembly of class representatives. The school directorate will discuss the cases with the assembly formulate strategies to tackle them.

15 minutes

You assign the different functions and duties to your students (according to the exercise sheets below).

Distribute the exercise sheets and explain to your students what they have to prepare.

- The 5 candidates will prepare their campaign and formulate a slogan.
- The journalists will prepare questions to be asked to the candidates in a public talk.
- The election committee will prepare the candidates list, the electors list, the elector's registration cards and the election protocol.
- The polling station committee will prepare the polling station and the ballots for the Election Day.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

5.2 Lesson 2: 45 minutes

20 minutes

The students prepare the election according to the appropriate exercise sheet (see below).

- Each candidate on his own: preparation of the individual campaign: campaign slogan, campaign billboard focusing on the key issues important to the candidate to prevent violence at the school.
- All the journalists together: formulation hard questions to be answered by the candidates in a public talk based on their campaign slogans of the candidates.
- All members of the election committee: establish the candidates list and validate the candidates, prepare the electors lists and the electors registration cards, prepare the election protocol.
- All members of the polling station committee: prepare the polling station and the ballots.

25 minutes

The students participate at the public talk.

- In the public talk the candidates present themselves and their election slogan. They answer to the questions of the journalists.
- Open the discussion to the public, the students can ask questions to the candidates.
- The students make their personal choice secretly of which candidate they will elect.

5.3 Lesson 3: 45 minutes

5 minutes

The students prepare the elections according to their function based on the appropriate exercise sheet.

- The polling station committee is setting up of the polling station.
- The election committee distributes the electors registration card to each student.
- The election committee checks, that the polling station is correctly set up:
 - candidates list present
 - electors list present
 - election booth prepared
 - blank ballots present in the election booth and pen to fill the ballot box
 - order and calm at the polling station
- The members of the polling station committee take up their duties:
 - one member is in charge of order and calm in the polling station and the queuing up of the electors
 - two member checks the identity of the electors and the validity of electors registration card and supervises the signing of the electors list by the elector
 - one member stacks the electors registration cards
 - one member marks the folded ballots and checks that only one ballot is cast by every elector

15 minutes

The students vote at the polling station.

- Opening of the election by the election committee.
- Students queue up and elect:
 - they present their electors registration card
 - they sign the electors registry
 - they go to the elections booth and write down the name of their candidate on the prepared ballot paper
 - they fold the ballot paper and step to the ballot box
 - the polling station committee marks the folded ballot and checks that only one ballot is cast
 - the voter casts his ballot into the ballot box and steps out of the polling station.

10 minutes

They counting is done and the results are announced.

- The election committee announces the end of the election and closure of the polling station.
- The polling station committee prepares the counting, seals the ballot box and destructs any blank ballot. Two and two members of the polling station committee take up their positions for the counting.
- The election committee orders the opening of the ballot box.
- The polling committee checks the number of signatures, electors registration cards and ballots. The three figures must correspond.
- The members of the polling station committee unfold the ballots and stack the ballots by candidates (four candidates equal four stacks).
- One member of the polling station committee counts the stacks. Another member counterchecks the result. The result for each candidate is written down on the elections protocol and added up. The number of election registration cards is written down on the protocol as well as the number of signatures and the total of cast ballots. The members of the polling station committee sign the protocol and hand it to the election committee.
- The election committee checks that the total of votes cast is equal to the number of electors registration cards handed in signatures on the electors list and ballots cast.
- The election committee announces the results.
- If the first two candidates have the same amount of votes, a further election would take place with only these two candidates left.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

15 minutes

You discuss of the election with your students and get feed backs.

- Discussion of the result and the election process.
- Discuss with your students questions of vote rigging and fraud in the election process.
- Discuss the need and opportunity to introduce an assembly of class representatives for your school.
- Get general feedback and inputs form your students.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 1

Exercise sheet for candidates

Prepare your individual campaign, formulate your slogan and create a bill board.
Explain to your electors how you would prevent and deal with violence at your school if you would be elected to board of class representatives.
Base your campaign on the examples of violence you have discussed in your class.

Cases of violence and drug abuse might be:

- physical assault of elder students against younger students
- aggression against girls by boys
- extortion
- robbery
- vandalism
- gang fights
- mobbing (exclusion of a student from a group of students)
- distribution, selling and use of drugs
- etc.

Consider measures to counter violence and drug abuse at your school and formulate your campaign slogan (use the billboard! Concentrate on a few keywords!)
You have 1 minute to present yourself and your program to your electors during the public discussion.

You can consider the following measures

- Stewards (students) patrolling the school premises before school and during the breaks to prevent violence and drug abuse occurring.
- Post box to anonymously denounce violence, drug abuse or other facts.
- Discuss the the problem of violence and drug abuse in the classes.
- Creation of an intervention group to intervene in cases of violence and drug abuse.
- Formulation of sensible sanctions in the case of violence and drug abuse.
- Call for a parent-teacher-conference to discuss the problem of violence and drug abuse.
- etc.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 2

Exercise sheet for journalists

Prepare questions to be asked to the candidates in the public talk. Think of this public talk as "hard talk". The candidates have to convince the electors, that their propositions to stem violence and drugs abuse at your school are sensible and feasible. They have to show why **they** should be elected.

You might ask them:

- Do you consider violence and drug abuse at your school as a problem?
- Please explain the main point in your program how you would stem violence and drug abuse?
- How do you guarantee with your proposed measures, that you can stem violence and drug abuse?
- Do you step down as a class representative, if the proposed measures don't produce any tangible results?
- Don't you think of the measures proposed by one of the other candidates?
- Why should your ideas work?
- Are your proposed measures not to weak?
- Don't you think you over react with your propositions?
- etc.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 3

Exercise sheet for the members of the election committee

The election committee has the following tasks and things to prepare:

In preparation of the election:

- You set up two electors lists (see model below) and define who is accepted as elector (only class mates).
- You produce the electors registration card according to the electors list (see model below).
- You set up the list of the candidates (see model below) and define who is eligible (only class mates).
- You prepare the counting sheet to be filled in by the polling station committee (see model below).
- You set up the protocol that is to be filled in by the polling station committee (see model below)
- Discuss the process of polling and the checks you make in the polling station to guarantee a free and fair election.

On Election Day:

- You distribute the electors registration cards and have every elector sign the receipt of his registration card on the first list.
- You give on list to the polling station committee. The committee uses the list to check who has voted.
- You hand the protocol to the polling station committee.
- You proceed with the supervision of the election and you guarantee a free and fair election.
- At the end of the Election Day you close the ballot station and advise the polling station committee to prepare the counting.
- Any left blank ballot papers have to be destroyed before the opening of the ballot box.
- Advise the polling station committee to open the ballot box and to begin counting.
- If you detect any kind of fraud or irregularities, you inform the chair of the supreme election committee, i.e. your teacher.

During counting:

- You check the counting based on the protocol. The numbers of elector's registration cards, signatures on the electors lists and ballots has to be the same as the total number of votes cast for all candidates.
- Once you have validated the election, you announce the result of the election
- If you detect any kind of fraud or irregularities, you inform the chair of the supreme election committee, i.e. your teacher.

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 4

Exercise sheet for the polling station committee

The polling station committee has the following tasks and things to prepare:

In preparation of the election:

- You prepare in accordance of the numbers of electors the ballots (see model below) and some more in provision (if somebody needs a new ballot paper).
- You prepare the ballot box with a slot out of a cardboard box or any other vessel suitable for this purpose (ideally the box is transparent)
- You prepare the electors booth so the elector can fill in the ballot unobserved and undisturbed. Take for example a piece of cardboard and fold it in U-shape. The cardboard should be about 30cm high and every leg of the U about 40cm long. A turned over box will also do the job.
- You make sure that you get the electors list and the protocol form the election committee.
- Discuss how to set up and organize the polling station and attribute a function to every member of the polling station committee.
- Make sure that all members of the polling station committee can vote.

On Election Day:

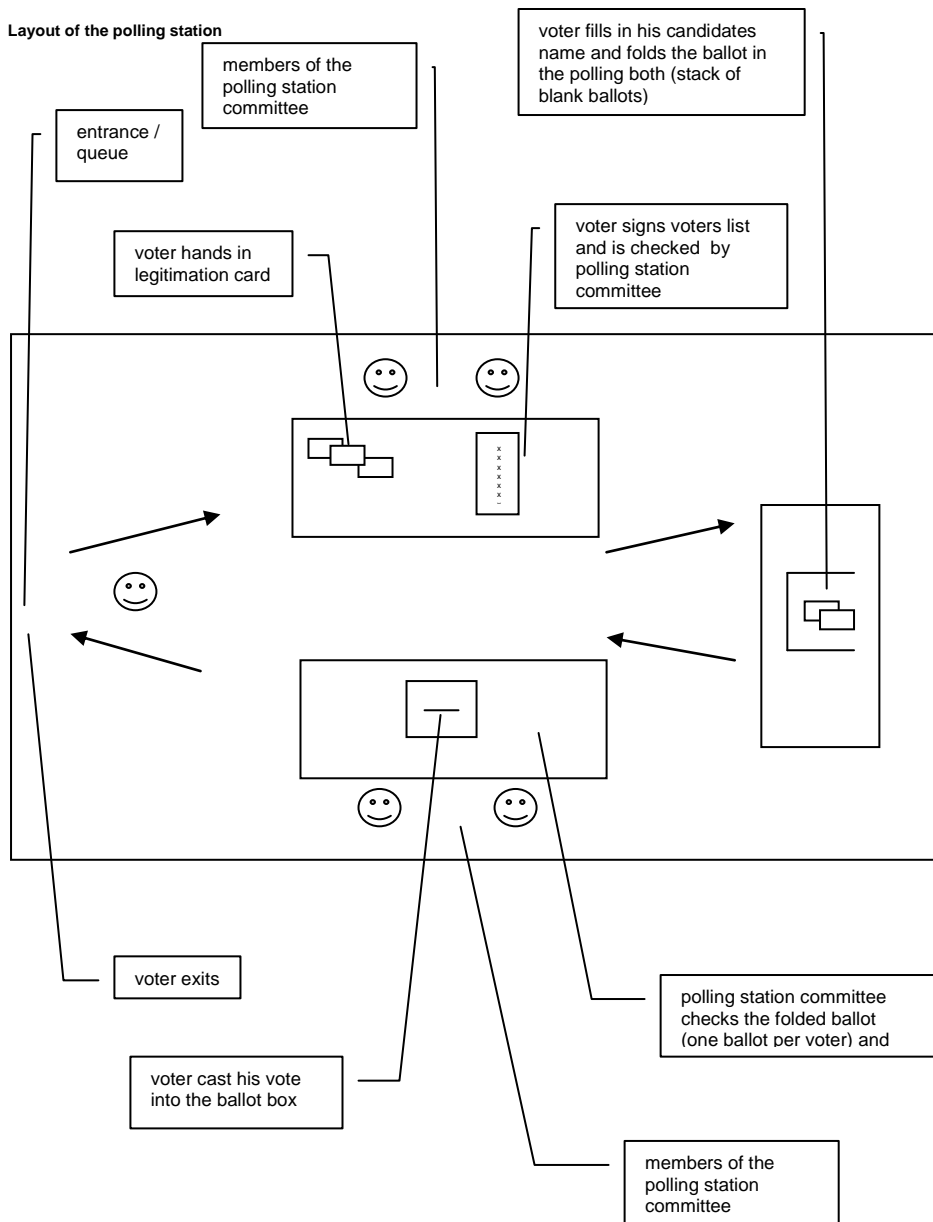
- You prepare the polling station according to the schema "Layout of the polling station" below.
- You manage the flow of electors in the polling station, one person at a time.
- You retrieve the electors registration cards check the elector and have him sign the electors list.
- Send the elector to the election booth, advise him to fill in the name of his candidate and to fold the ballot.
- Mark the folded ballot; check that there is only one ballot per elector.
- Have the elector cast his ballot in the ballot box and have the elector leave the polling station.
- If you detect any kind of fraud or irregularities, you inform the election committee.

During counting:

- As advised by the election committee prepare the polling station for the counting, destroy any left blank ballot papers.
- When advised by the election committee open the ballot box and begin with the counting.
- Make stacks with the ballots for every candidate, have the stacks counted and recounted by two different members of the polling station committee.
- Fill in the protocol, have it signed by the polling station committee members and hand it to the election committee.
- If you detect any kind of fraud or irregularities, you inform the election committee.

Annexe 5

Layout of the polling station



Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 7

Voter's registration card

Fill in and distribute on the every voter

Family Name Name Address Town Date of birth	Voters registration card issued by [fill in name of school] _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		Family Name Name Address Town Date of birth	Voters registration card issued by _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Family Name Name Address Town Date of birth	Voters registration card issued by _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		Family Name Name Address Town Date of birth	Voters registration card issued by _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
Family Name Name Address Town Date of birth	Voters registration card issued by _____ _____ _____ _____ _____		Family Name Name Address Town Date of birth	Voters registration card issued by _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 8

Ballot paper

Prepare blank ballot papers and put them into the polling both / produce some more than you count voters

<p>Election of a representative to the assembly of class representatives of the school</p> <p><i>[fill in name of school]</i> in <i>[fill in name of town]</i></p> <p>on the <i>[fill in date of the election]</i></p> <p>Name of the candidate</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Election of a representative to the assembly of class representatives of the school</p> <p>_____ in _____</p> <p>on the _____</p> <p>Name of the candidate</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Election of a representative to the assembly of class representatives of the school</p> <p>_____ in _____</p> <p>on the _____</p> <p>Name of the candidate</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Election of a representative to the assembly of class representatives of the school</p> <p>_____ in _____</p> <p>on the _____</p> <p>Name of the candidate</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>Election of a representative to the assembly of class representatives of the school</p> <p>_____ in _____</p> <p>on the _____</p> <p>Name of the candidate</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>Election of a representative to the assembly of class representatives of the school</p> <p>_____ in _____</p> <p>on the _____</p> <p>Name of the candidate</p> <p>_____</p>

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
 Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 9

Counting sheet for the polling station committee

Polling station committee use this list to do the counting of the ballots cast

Candidate	Name	Votes cast
Candidate No 1	_____	
Candidate No 2	_____	
Candidate No 3	_____	
Candidate No 4	_____	
Total of votes [must be equal to the number of electors legitimization cards, signature on the electors lists and ballots cast]		

Date: _____

School: _____

Town: _____

Polling station: _____

Signatures of the members of the polling station committee:

Patrick Trees, Secretary General of the Canton Bern Parliament, Switzerland
Isabelle Bichsel, high school professor for civic education and Italian language, Switzerland

Annexe 10

Election protocol

Members of the polling station committee fill in the protocol based on the counting sheet

Election of a member to the assembly of class representatives

School _____

Town _____

Polling station: _____

Date of the election _____

Candidate	number of votes
Candidate with the highest score / candidate elected Name: _____	
Candidate with the second highest score / not elected Name: _____	
Candidate with the third highest score / not elected Name: _____	
Candidate with the fourth highest score / not elected Name: _____	
Candidate with the fifth highest score / not elected Name: _____	

Signatures of the members of the election committee: