

Youth Leadership

A brief guide for Y6-Y13 teachers

Many school-based campaigns and social action projects provide opportunities for young people to demonstrate **youth leadership**. Examples include Send My Friend To School, Schools of Sanctuary, Fairtrade Schools, Rights Respecting Schools, Global Neighbours and Oxfam's Schools Speak Out among others.

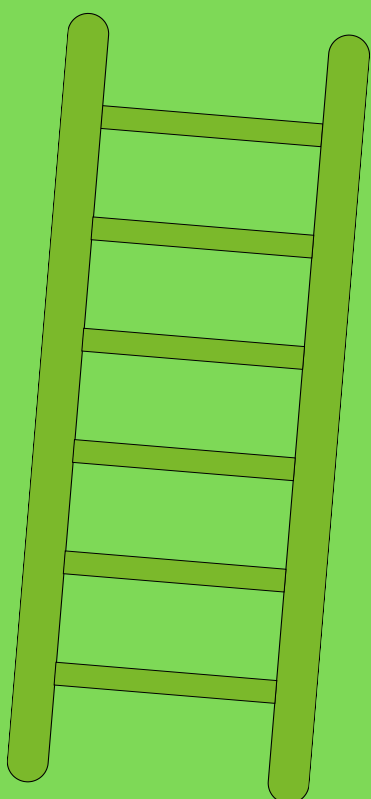
This guide first presents a model for youth leadership (Hart's Ladder) and then provides practical tips for teachers on how to embed effective youth leadership into active citizenship projects within the school setting.



Photo: Radka Dolinska/Oxfam

Hart's Ladder of Participation - A Youth Leadership Model.

Roger Hart's Ladder of Participation is a useful framework for designing activities with a strong element of youth leadership. Aim to design activities where young people are working on one of the top rungs of the ladder (rungs 4-6, see below). Likewise, where possible, try to avoid the lowest rungs (rungs 1-2) which provide very few opportunities for youth leadership. Be mindful of the existing knowledge, skills and experiences young people already have, and try to move up the ladder from where you think they are at present, one rung at a time.



6. Young people make decisions, initiate, design and run their own projects.

5. Young people initiate, design and run their own projects working in partnership with teachers to make decisions.

4. Teachers have an initial idea. Young people are involved in planning and doing at every stage.

3. Projects are designed and run by teachers. Teachers fully consult young people at each stage.

2. Teachers design, run and delegate. Young people given limited input.

1. Teachers tell young people what to do and say. Young people have little understanding of the issues or why they are doing what they are doing.

TAKE CARE TO PARTICIPATE SAFELY

Getting started - The role of the teacher.

Encouraging youth leadership within the school setting may take some time and involve the teacher in explicitly redefining their relationship with young people to make their relationship more democratic. After all, many young people simply assume from their everyday experiences that the teacher is in charge. Encouraging safe and open participation is the first step to building youth leadership.

In Teaching Controversial Issues - A Guide for Schools Oxfam recommends teachers should do the following;

- Establish agreed and consistent ground rules, and create a safe space for conversations so young people feel supported and secure in expressing their opinions.
- Adopt an appropriate role in relation to the activity taking place and make it clear to the young people what this role is and why the teacher is taking this approach. This will almost certainly be different to the teacher's usual role of 'instructor' and provides space for young people to discuss and express their ideas more freely. The six roles are;
 1. Committed.
 2. Objective or Academic.
 3. Devil's Advocate.
 4. Advocate.
 5. Impartial Chairperson
 6. Declared Interest.
- See page 9 of Teaching Controversial Issues for an explanation of these roles.



Creating a safe and open space for discussion is the first step towards successful youth leadership

**SUCCESSFUL YOUTH LEADERSHIP REQUIRES THE
TEACHER TO HAND OVER CONTROL TO CHILDREN**

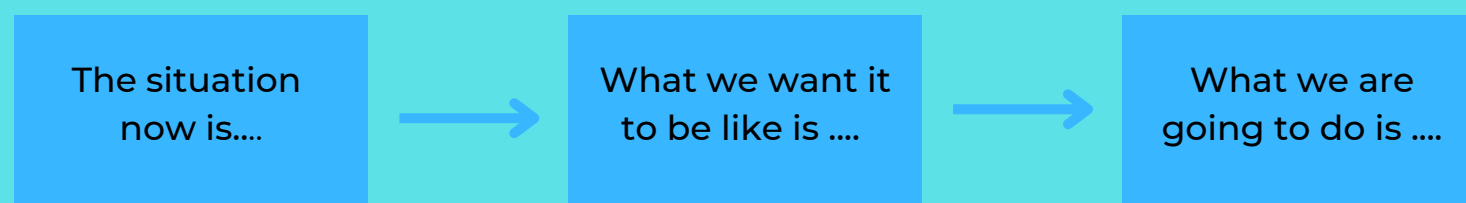
Photo: John McLaverty/Oxfam

Setting goals and overcoming obstacles - The challenges of youth leadership.

Get Global! is a guide for teachers on how to facilitate active global citizenship. It is written for use with 11-16 year olds, but many of the activities could be adapted for younger or older learners. Despite being first published in 2003, its methodologies and activities are still robust. Get Global! sets out a full pedagogy for youth-led citizenship. The many games and activities can be used in combination or as stand alone activities depending on the context. The following two activities from Get Global! support young people to think critically about the citizenship action they could take in response to a particular issue.

1. Setting goals - What do we want to happen?

This is an activity to help young people identify possible actions they could take in response to an issue. In groups young people should use words and/or pictures to complete a copy of the flow diagram below.



In their groups young people should then discuss whether their 'what we are going to do' plan is **SMART**.

S Specific – it can be clearly defined.

M Measurable – any change that happens can be measured.

A Achievable – it is possible to do.

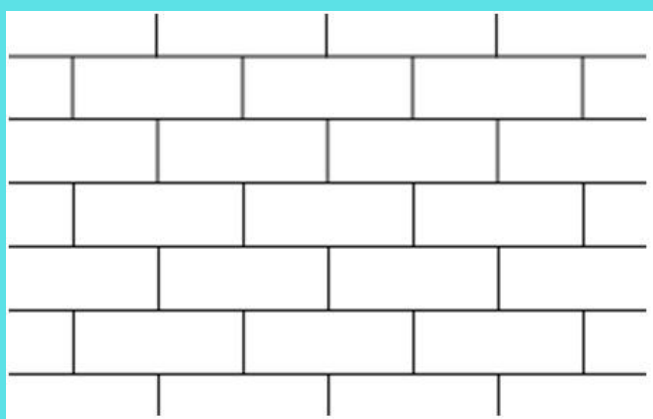
R Realistic – it can be done with the resources that are available.

T Time-bound – it can be done within the time available (for example, in one term).

If their plan is not **SMART** they should think about how it could be changed to make it **SMARTer**.

2. Overcoming obstacles - Bricks and Hammers.

Once young people have agreed what **SMART** action to take, they will still face challenges and obstacles. Bricks and Hammers helps them identify these obstacles and overcome the challenges.



Young people should begin by drawing a brick wall on a large piece of paper.

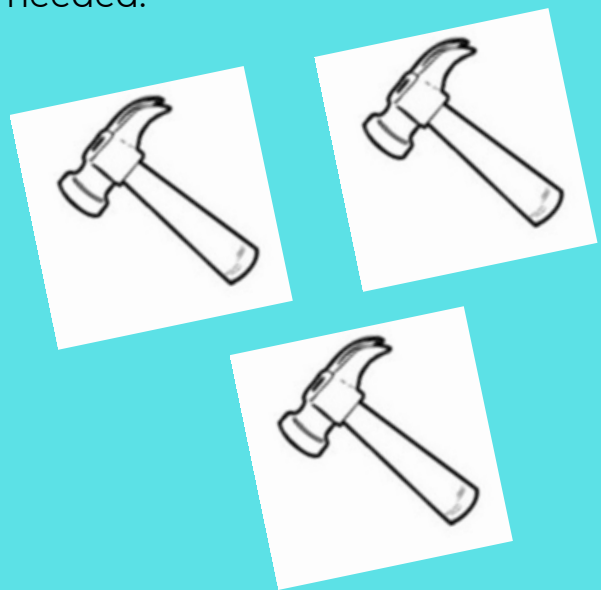
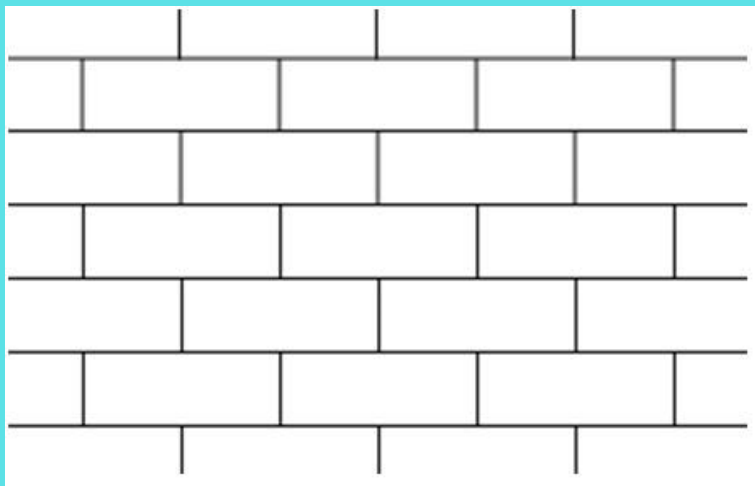
**IT'S BETTER TO PLAN SOMETHING SMALL
THAT SUCCEEDS THAN SOMETHING BIG
THAT FAILS**

Each brick in the wall represents a potential obstacle or challenge which the young people may face when taking the action they have decided upon. Some challenges may be routine. For example, who to ask for permission to use the school hall. Others may be more fundamental. For example, how to invite a keynote speaker they don't personally know. All the challenges the young people can think of should be written on the bricks, one challenge per brick.

Next the young people should make a set of paper hammers, like the ones below. There are many examples of hammer images available online. Each hammer represents a possible solution to a challenge. The hammers can be used to knock down the obstacles presented by the bricks.

Young people should then write a potential solution to each challenge on a hammer and attach the hammer to the relevant brick. Remember that a solution may involve returning to the challenge and thinking about it in a different way.

When they have finished, young people should review their bricks and hammers and agree any new action points that may be needed.



Writing an action plan - Making it work in real life.

The above activities help young people to work together to agree an action, identify potential challenges and come up with ways to overcome them. Key points from these activities should be written down and kept for future reference.

The next step in youth leadership is for young people to take the lead in putting their ideas into action. This may take a lengthy period of weeks or even months to complete. For this to be successful young people should work together to create an action plan and then hold their own meetings to implement and review their plan over a period of time.

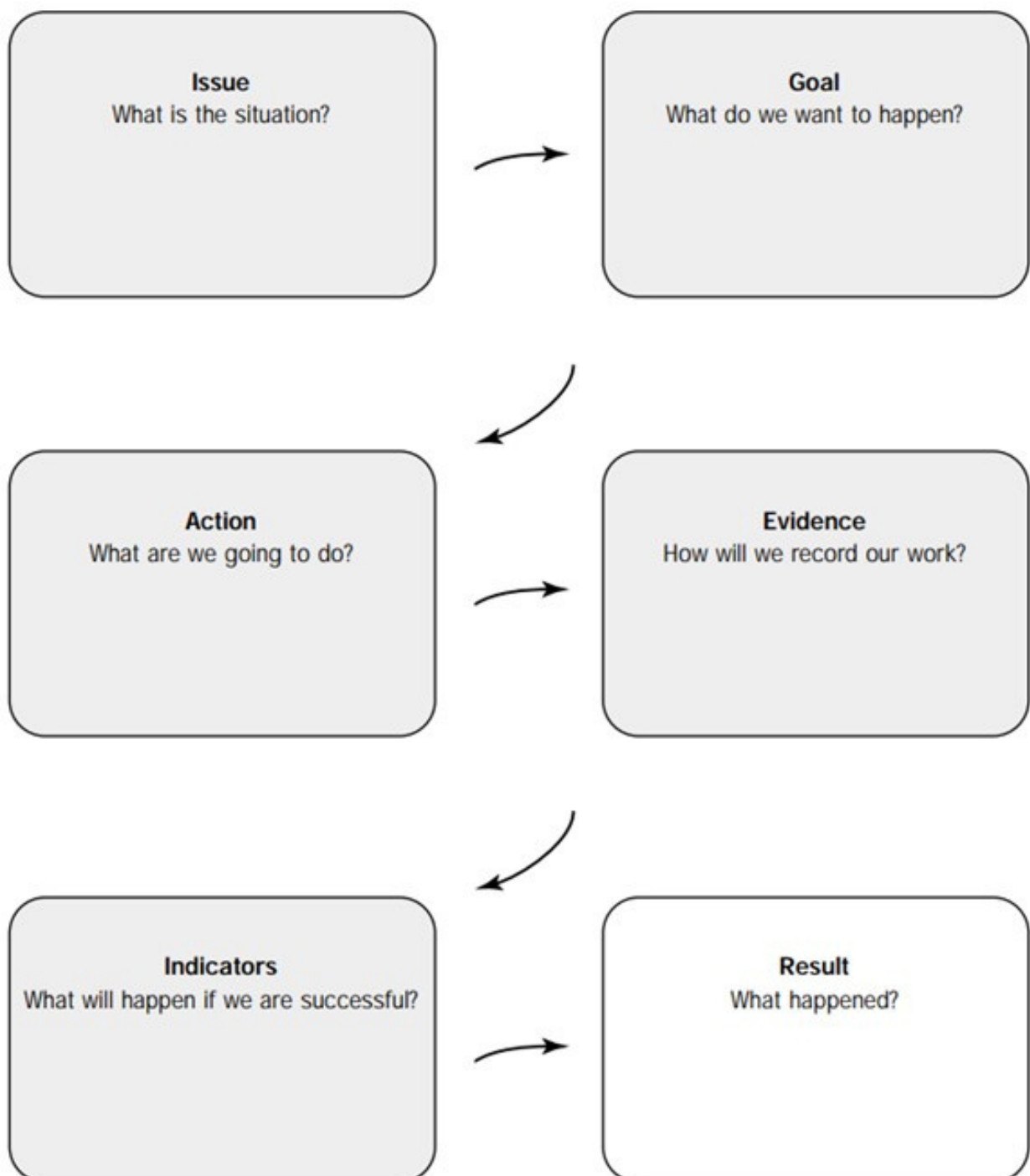
BE HONEST ABOUT THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AND THE TIME YOU HAVE. IT'S NOT POSSIBLE TO DO EVERYTHING. MAKE YOUR PLAN FIT THE TIME AVAILABLE AND THE RESOURCES YOU HAVE IN YOUR GROUP

There are many templates young people could use to complete their action plans. The following example is also from GetGlobal!

It presents a logical framework (or logframe) to help young people set goals, list the actions to achieve those goals, identify measurable outcomes and evaluate the results. This is precisely how NGOs and charities plan their projects. If budget is available, young people should have a say in how it is allocated as part of their plans.

There are two top tips

- 1.The plan should be expanded to fit in as much detail as is neccessary. For example, young people's names could be attached to individual tasks in 'what are we going to do?'
- 2.The plan is flexible. If it doesn't work out, change it. The **Bricks and Hammers** activity above may help if young people encounter barriers or challenges.



PLANS ARE FLEXIBLE. IF THEY'RE NOT WORKING, CHANGE THEM!

From Get Global! Section 2, pg 104

Holding meetings - Keeping the momentum of the project going.

Many projects require young people to maintain momentum and make progress over a number of weeks or even months as they implement their action plans. This can be difficult. Adults are accustomed to using regular work meetings to make decisions, allocate responsibilities and check progress. Young people are used to teacher-led lessons, and may never have previously attended a 'meeting'. The following advice is designed to introduce meetings led by young people as a tool for youth leadership. They are summarised from the teacher guidance in the Erasmus+ project Schools For Future Youth.



1. Tips for running a great meeting

Photo: Radka Dolinska/Oxfam

A meeting should be welcoming, engaging, effective and get things done. Ask young people to think of five tips for holding a great meeting and see if they agree with the list below. These are suggestions. Young people may suggest alternative and better ideas.

1. **A good chair.** The chairperson or facilitator makes sure everybody has a turn to speak if they wish, nobody dominates the discussion and everyone sticks to the agenda. This is a skill. The role of chair should be taken in turns so that everyone has a go and is able to gain experience. A teacher may chair the first meeting to model the required skills, but make it clear that chairing is not the teacher's responsibility.

2. **A friendly atmosphere.** The atmosphere should be welcoming and safe. Participants may disagree but should always be respectful. Once a decision is fairly made, everybody should follow it, even if they personally disagree. Taking breaks, putting on some music or bringing snacks can all help to create a friendly atmosphere.

3. **Clear goals.** The best meetings are when everyone is clear about what they're trying to achieve. If participants get stuck they should remember the meeting's goals.

4. **A clear agenda.** The agenda is the list of what will be discussed in the meeting. It should be shared beforehand so everyone can see what there is to do in the time available. To make sure everything fits in, each agenda item should be allocated a time limit. It's the responsibility of the chairperson to make sure the meeting sticks to the agreed timetable.

5. **Action points.** Each meeting should have a note-taker or 'secretary' who keeps a written record of the group's decisions, what people agreed to do and the deadlines. The notes (or 'minutes') should be sent around after the meeting so everyone knows what they need to do and people who didn't attend the meeting stay informed.



2. Keeping track of what a meeting decides

One of the most difficult aspects of running a meeting isn't the meeting itself, but what happens in between meetings. Use this template to help keep track of what is decided during a meeting and to make sure everybody does what they agreed to do before the next meeting. Expand the spaces for notes as necessary.

Title of the meeting _____ **Date of the meeting** _____

Names of the people at the meeting	
Names of the people who couldn't come	
Report back of what people agreed to do at the last meeting	
Agenda item one (Summarise here)	Actions agreed Who's leading? What needs to be done? When does it need to happen by? Who should help? What will success look like?
<i>Repeat for each of the agenda items</i>	
Any Other Business (AOB) Leave some time at the end of the meeting to discuss any topics which were not on the agenda. At the end of the meeting the chairperson should ask 'is there any other business?' and attendees may suggest additional topics to discuss.	Actions agreed Who's leading? What needs to be done? When does it need to happen by? Who should help? What will success look like?
Agree the date, place and time of the next meeting	

IF YOU DON'T DO ALL THE THINGS YOU SET OUT TO DO IN BETWEEN MEETINGS BE HONEST WITH EACH OTHER, DISCUSS THE REASONS WHY AND RESCHEDULE YOUR PLANS. TRY YOUR BEST TO KEEP TO YOUR NEW SCHEDULE



Possible actions

- Now the group is organised, here are some ideas for taking action.

Here are some possible actions the group could take. This is not a complete list, and young people should be encouraged to be as creative as possible. Whatever plan they come up with, the group should think about how their actions will fit together to make up an overall campaign.

The action plan should agree with these three points

1. The plan should be possible to do.
2. The group should be enthusiastic and passionate about doing it.
3. Carrying out the plan should have an impact and make a difference.

If the plan doesn't meet **one** of the above points, then the group should revise it. It's fine to make mistakes and change plans. This is how everyone learns.

1. Teach other learners and ask for their support

The group teaches other learners at school about their issue or campaign, and asks for their support. This could be done in an **assembly**, **lessons** or events such as a **lunchtime stall**. Remember that whether other learners give their support is entirely voluntary. There are four tips for success:

1. Plan what to say and prepare relevant materials - for example a slideshow, a learning activity or a poster.
2. Keep it simple and have clear aims. Don't assume others will have prior knowledge about your issue or campaign.
3. Rehearse first.
4. Ask the audience to take an action to support the campaign - for example, make a pledge or write a postcard to hand to the school's MP.



Photo:
Radka Dolinska/Oxfam

2. Take action in your old primary school

The young people contact their old primary school(s) and ask to present an assembly or lesson. A teacher will almost certainly have the contact details of local primary schools. This will provide the opportunity to develop the young people's organisational and presentation skills, and include other schools in their campaign.

AGREE YOUR PLANS WITH YOUR TEACHER BEFORE YOU BEGIN

3. Get creative

Get creative to support campaigning at school. The group could think about how to use their art and craft skills to design posters and displays. Can the drama department help to stage a stunt? Does the group have the social media skills to takeover a school Twitter or Instagram account, or design a page on the school website? As with all these suggested ideas, the group should agree their plans with a teacher before they begin to implement them.



Photo:
John McLaverty/Oxfam

4. Meet the school's Member of Parliament

Influencing the school's MP and the Government to support the campaign is a powerful way to help make change happen. MPs are usually in their constituencies every **Friday**. Young people could invite their MP to school or visit the MP's local drop-in 'surgery'. They can learn more about MPs and how to contact them at www.theyworkforyou.com. Whether they meet their MP face to face or simply write them a letter, young people should use the opportunity to learn from their MP and ask the MP to take an action on their behalf.

5. Write a press release

The local newspaper is often looking for stories, so the young people could write a press release and try to get the campaign into their local paper. Or they could write for the school website or newsletter. The group should tell readers about the issue, the action they are taking and how readers may offer their support.

6. Do some research

Organisations campaigning on similar issues to the group's often publish reports, briefings and stories. Young people could improve their understanding by reading some of these documents and apply their learning while carrying out their plans. They should always be on the lookout for bias (Oxfam's [Teaching Controversial Issues](#) guide may be helpful with this) and remember that it's good to have some facts and figures, but that nobody needs to be an absolute expert. Passion, interest and commitment are much more important.

GOOD LUCK!

Useful resources

[Organising Engagement - Ladder of Children's Participation](#) (Hart's Ladder)

[Oxfam Global Citizenship Guides](#)

Education For Global Citizenship (the 'Green Guide')
Global Citizenship In The Classroom (the 'Blue Guide')
Teaching Controversial Issues
The Sustainable Development Goals
Maths And Global Citizenship
Science And Global Citizenship
English And Global Citizenship

[Oxfam Education](#) resources

Oxfam [Schools Speak Out](#) programme

[Send My Friend To School](#)

[The Climate Coalition](#) Schools

[Schools of Sanctuary](#)

[Fairtrade Schools](#)

UNICEF [Rights Respecting Schools](#)

Christian Aid [Global Neighbours](#)

[Get Global! A guide to active global citizenship for 11-16 year olds](#)

[Schools For Future Youth - Skills Development](#)

[They Work For You](#)

TheyWorkForYou takes open data from the UK Parliament, and presents it in a way that's easy to follow – for everyone. So now you can check, with just a few clicks: are MPs working for you?

[Guardian - How To Write An Effective Press Release](#)