



**Smart School Councils**

# DEBATE PACK

Are you passionate about sharpening your critical thinking and speaking skills?

**SHOULD WE LOWER THE VOTING AGE TO 16?**



[WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK](http://WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK)

# How to Use this Debate Pack

Whether you have just a few minutes or a full lesson, this Debate Pack has got you covered. Check out the Certificates at the end too.

## How to find the debate video and send to teachers

1. Log in to the [Smart School Councils platform](#) using your school details.
2. Click on the blue Class Meeting Tool button in the dashboard.
3. Click on 'Next Meeting' at the top of the page.
4. To get started, click on 'click here' to browse existing questions and options.
5. If the debate topic is part of this week's question, it will appear there. Otherwise, click 'Search All' and type in the debate topic you're looking for.

### Got five minutes?

Play the debate video straight through and dive right into the debate. No need to pause at the prompts. It's a quick, engaging way to get your students thinking.

### Got 10/15 minutes?

Pause at the prompts in the video to explore additional ideas your class might have. Use the additional points or Power Facts if you'd like.

### Want to extend to 30 minutes or a full lesson?

Check out the lesson plan and writing tasks below. There is also a full Fact Sheet with amazing further reading if your students want to go deeper on the topic.

## What do the icons in the pack mean?



This is what the presenter says on the video



This is a Power Fact to explain or prompt debate that's not in the video



This is an additional debate point you can use that's not in the video

# Introduction and Brain Gym Question

## Introduction



Welcome to the Big Debate Club! My name is Becky and today we are debating the question... Should we lower the voting age to 16? Democracy is built on the idea that every voice matters, including young people's voices. At 16, young people are already trusted with significant responsibilities—like driving cars, and working jobs so if they are mature enough to have these important roles, shouldn't they also have a say in the future of their country? Lowering the voting age could empower a new engaged generation to have a direct role in shaping the policies from education to the environment. But do teenagers have the necessary experience to make informed decisions at the ballot box? You decide!

So in this debate you can either argue that we should lower the voting age to 16 or that we shouldn't.

## Brain Gym Question

Before we get started, I have a question for you...

All of these countries allow voting at 16, but which country was the first to lower the voting age to 16 for national elections?

- a. Austria
- b. Brazil
- c. Cuba
- d. Scotland

Which of the 4 potential answers will you choose? Pause the video, turn to your partner and tell them your answer.

Allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to vote in elections has been a growing focus among electoral reform advocates, particularly for its potential to establish voting habits early. Research from the Centre for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) emphasises that many young people who engage civically from an early age are more likely to continue participating in elections as adults. [Article](#).



# AGAINST: We shouldn't lower the voting age to 16

We're going to share reasons for both sides of the debate, then it's up to you to think of the rest!

## Lack of civic engagement among young adults

You might be thinking that there is a lack of civic engagement in young adults. Statistics show that voter turnout is often low among young adults aged 18-24 so adding more younger voters might not increase overall engagement and could instead result in a larger proportion of uninterested voters.

## Susceptible to influence due to life experience

You could say that due to lack of life experience, they might be susceptible to influence. Younger individuals might be more easily influenced by parents, teachers, or peers, which could lead to voting decisions that reflect others' opinions rather than their own judgement.

Can you think of another reason why we shouldn't lower the voting age to 16? 

## They might not know enough about politics to vote

16- and 17-year-olds may have limited exposure to political issues/processes due to focusing on school. Studies show civic knowledge generally increases with experience, so older people are, in theory, more prepared to navigate political voting.

## They might not have the maturity to vote on complex issues

16-year-olds may not have the maturity to make decisions on complex issues. Research on the adolescent brain says that cognitive and emotional maturity continues to grow into the early twenties, especially in areas like long-term planning and impulse control.

## Current voters are reluctant to change the voting age

A 2019 Hill-HarrisX poll revealed that 84% of registered US voters opposed lowering the voting age to 16, indicating a strong public reluctance to make this change. Most adults across political and age demographics believe that 16-year-olds may lack the maturity and independence needed to vote responsibly. [Article](#).



## FOR: We should lower the voting age to 16



Now let's change positions and consider why you might argue that we should lower the voting to 16.

### We have changed the age in some parts of the UK, why not all?

You might be thinking that we have in some parts of the UK, why not all? Both Wales and Scotland have successfully lowered the voting age to 16 for their national and local elections. The positive outcomes in these regions—where young people have shown they can be informed and engaged voters—demonstrate that 16-year-olds are capable of making meaningful contributions to democracy.

### There needs to be more representation of youth interests

Or you could argue that there needs to be more representation of youth interests. Young people are directly affected by many political decisions, such as those related to education, especially as no other voting groups attend school, so allowing 16-year-olds to vote ensures that their interests and perspectives are represented in the political process.

Can you think of another reason why we should lower the voting age to 16? 

### They are informed and engaged, so why not let them vote?



Today's teens are highly informed due to widespread access to information through digital media. Many young people are actively involved in social and political issues, from climate change to human rights issues, which directly impact their futures. Lowering the voting age would give them a say in decisions that affect their lives.

### It has been successful in other countries

Studies show that 16- and 17-year-olds in Austria participate actively in elections, for example, turnout among these young voters is relatively high, often surpassing that of slightly older first-time voters (aged 18-20), with differences in turnout rates ranging from 2.3% to 10% depending on the election. [Article](#).



# FactSheet: Should we lower the voting age to 16?



Here's six key facts - three on each side - if you'd like to go a little deeper.

## We shouldn't lower the voting age

### *Lower voting knowledge:*

Opponents argue that 16-year-olds may not possess sufficient political knowledge or understanding of complex issues to make informed decisions. In the U.S., for example, civics knowledge among high school students is low, with only 24% scoring proficient in recent assessments. [Source.](#)

### *Public opinions against lowering the voting age:*

In the U.S., public opinion remains largely opposed to lowering the voting age. A 2019 Hill-HarrisX poll found that 84% of respondents opposed reducing the voting age to 16, reflecting broad concerns about maturity and political readiness. [Source.](#)

### *Already low turnout for the youngest voters:*

in the U.S., younger voters already have some of the lowest participation rates. In 2020, only around 46% of millennials voted, compared to 72% among older generations. This trend suggests that expanding voting to even younger voters might not necessarily improve overall turnout. [Source.](#)

## We should lower the voting age

### *It has been proven to work and be successful in Austria:*

Evidence from Austria, where the voting age was lowered to 16 in 2007, shows that turnout among 16- and 17-year-olds is often higher than among older first-time voters aged 18-20. These younger voters in Austria have shown stable participation levels and, with adequate civic education, engage meaningfully with political processes. [Source.](#)

### *It has been proven to work and be successful in Scotland:*

In the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, 16- and 17-year-olds were allowed to vote. This age group showed a strong turnout and demonstrated high engagement and understanding of the issues. Since then, Scotland has extended voting rights to 16-year-olds in local and Scottish parliamentary elections. [Source.](#)

### *It has been proven to work and be successful in Brazil and Argentina:*

In several Latin American countries, including Brazil and Argentina, voting is allowed at 16. In Argentina, youth voting was encouraged through comprehensive civic education programs, which supported informed participation. These cases show that support structures can make youth voting successful. [Source.](#)



# Extra Resources for your lesson inspired by the book: 'How to be a Revolutionary' by Lucy Ann Unwin

## **EXTRACT 1B: THE BAD GUYS?**

(from CHAPTER 7 - Never Leave a Lily: pages 77-78)

*'How come you're here?' she said. 'You're campaigning, right?'*

*I sighed. 'My dad's friends all hand these out. To be honest, I don't really get it. They look dead boring, but they made this one mean man really angry!' I dropped my voice to a whisper. 'I think it was Pea-Brain's dad.'*

*Annalise was totally gawping at me. 'You haven't read these at all, have you? What did you think you were handing out?'*

*I shrugged. 'I mean, I know they're for Labour, and the election... This stuff's all over our house. I guess I hadn't really given much thought to the whole sides thing.'*

*Annalise propped herself on the edge of the table. 'OK...'. She sounded like she was thinking. 'Well, my mum's a Labour supporter and always has been, but my dad votes for the Conservatives.'*

*I actually gasped. 'The bad guys?'*

*Annalise frowned. 'Well, it's not that simple, is it? My dad thinks his lot "help people help themselves".'*

*That certainly didn't sound evil. I remembered Bernard saying the other teams thought they were changing the world too.*

*'Mum says he just doesn't want to pay more tax though.' Annalise laughed, ponytail swinging. 'He goes pink when she says that, so I think she might be right! Anyway, I think I would vote Green...'*

## Questions and Policy Suggestions:

1. The text mentions an upcoming General Election. Do you know what a General Election is?
2. Why aren't kids allowed to vote in it? Do you think they should have the right to vote?
3. The narrator (Natalie) is handing out leaflets to the public. Why is she doing this?
4. What is politics? Why is it important for society? How do political decisions affect our daily lives?
5. Find the names of the three different political parties mentioned in the extract.
6. Natalie refers to the Conservatives as "the bad guys." Why might she use this label? How does Annalise help her see beyond stereotypes and consider a more balanced view of the political parties?
7. How can young people get involved in politics or make their voices heard even if they can't vote yet?

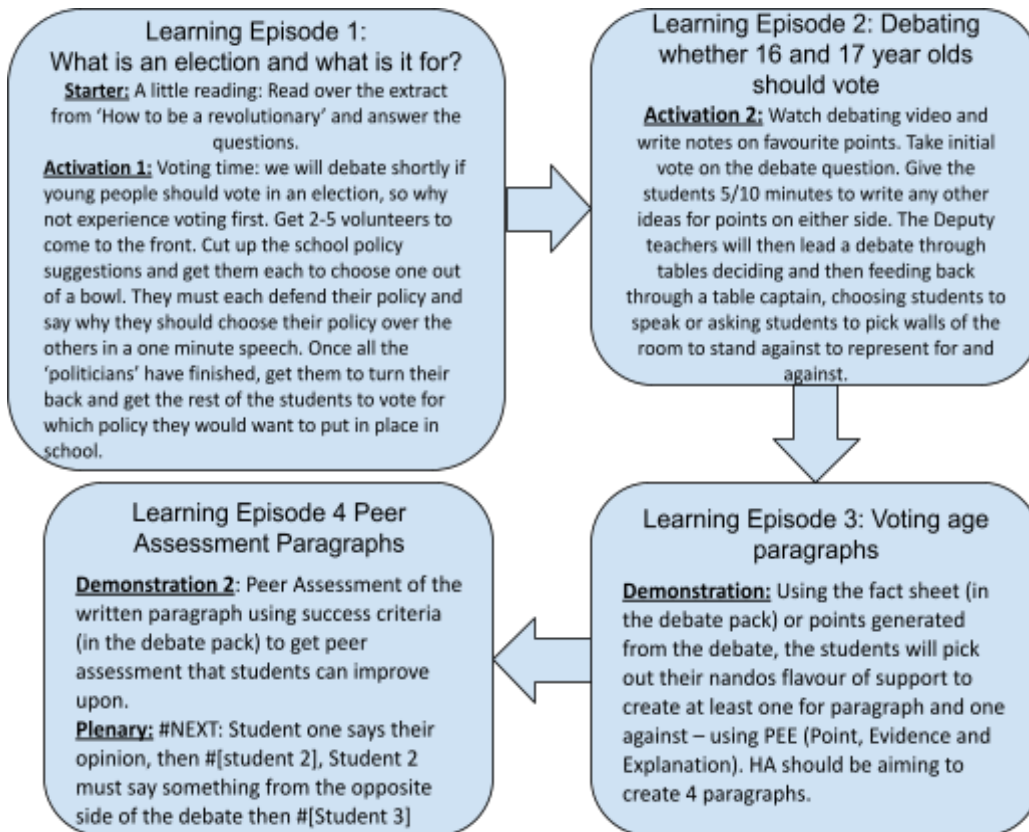
<p><b>Policy 1: Improving School Facilities</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 1: Build a new playground with modern equipment and a safe surface.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 2: Renovate the school library to include more books, cosy corners and technology areas.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 3: Construct a new sports pitch for activities like football, rugby or track events.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 4: Add more green spaces and outdoor learning areas to the school grounds.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 5: Install air conditioning in classrooms to improve comfort and learning conditions.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 6: Build a dedicated art and craft studio with space and materials for creative projects.</p>	<p><b>Policy 2: Making School Meals Better</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 1: Allow students to design their own menus for a day, with their favourite foods.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 2: Have days where the school serves foods from different countries or cultures.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 3: Give all students free meals, which could be a big cost for the school/government.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 4: Remove sugary snacks from the menu to promote healthier eating habits.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 5: Serve smaller-sized portions to help prevent food waste.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 6: Include more fruit and vegetables to help students achieve eating their five-a-day.</p>
<p><b>Policy 3: Homework</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 1: Have homework-free weekends once a month so students can enjoy their time off.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 2: Provide options boards so students can choose the type of homework they complete.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 3: Do the homework the teacher sets because they know best how to support you.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 4: Ban all types of homework so students can focus on their free time activities.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 5: Only set homework over school holidays so students have enough time to complete it.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 6: Make all homework projects collaborative so they involve students working together.</p>	<p><b>Policy 4: After-School Activities</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 1: Create a coding club where students can work on technology projects.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 2: Launch a debate club where students can practise public speaking and critical thinking.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 3: Develop a drama club with opportunities for acting, stage design and scriptwriting.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 4: Get students to lead after-school clubs to help out in the school community.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 5: Stop all after-school clubs because it means teachers have to work extra hours.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Idea 6: Start a club where a new sport is introduced every term or half term.</p>



# 'Debate your Perfect Point' Lesson Plan

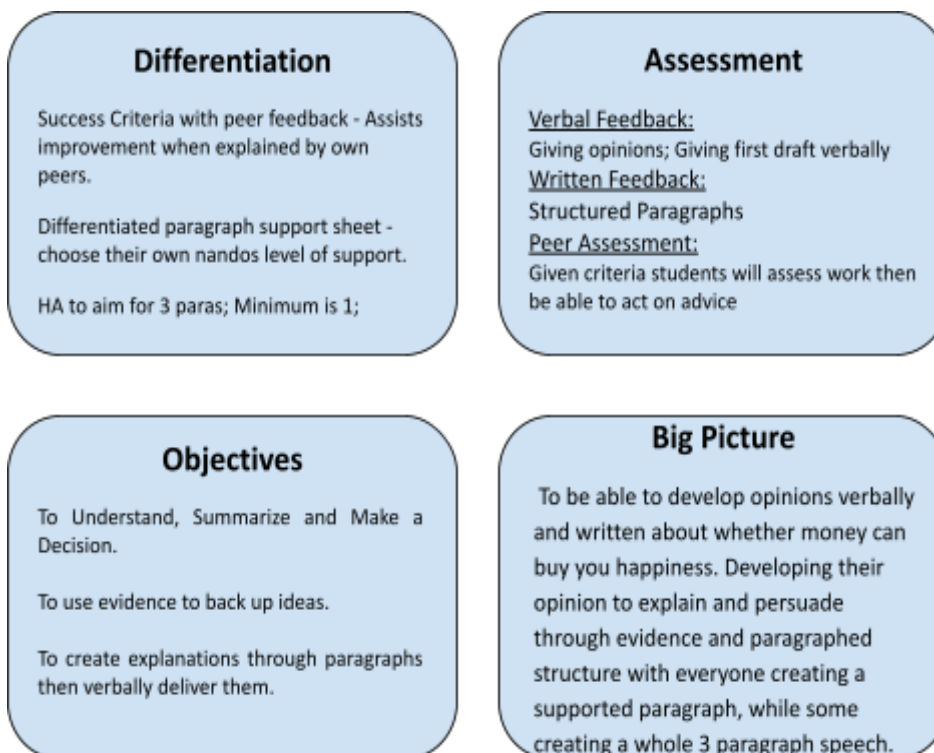
## Structure of the Lesson

Here's a lesson plan for you - including learning episodes, inclusion of our resources and ways to differentiate to make sure everyone's needs are met in your class.



## What are we trying to achieve?

And how can we check every student can do this in your class?



## Success Criteria: Paragraph/Speech Writing

### Level 3

Make a single sentence point. Mention a fact and say what you think of it. Use full sentences. 1 paragraph written.

### Level 4

Make a simple and short sentence for your point. Make a simple descriptive comment about the fact chosen and the impact that it has. Some link to the question is established. 1-2 paragraphs written.

### Level 5

A simple sentence point. An effective piece of evidence that supports the point. Explanation of how the evidence supports the point and proves it. Link made back to the original debate question and how it answers it. 2-3 Paragraphs written.

### Level 6

Clear, short point. Evidence is written in their own words. Explanation of how the evidence is relevant and proves the point. Explanation of why this evidence is important. Link back to the original debate question and whether this is the strongest point out of all points written. 3 Paragraphs written.

## Writing Paragraph Support

### POINT

Set out the point you are making in one sentence and which side of the debate it comes from.. Make sure to use the question words to phrase your viewpoint as it shows your understanding of the question.

### EVIDENCE

Demonstrate the view you are making with a specific piece of evidence – an example, fact or idea.

### EXPLANATION

Explain how the evidence you just used proves the point you made at the start of the paragraph.

### LINK

Relate how your point answers the question and the debate. Prove it? Disprove it?

# Sentence Starters

## **POINT**

LEMON & HERB: One reason why I (agree/disagree) with this debate is because...

MEDIUM: One point I have for this debate is...

HOT: You could say that...

## **EVIDENCE**

LEMON & HERB: One way I can prove my point is through this example...

MEDIUM: I can show this works through the fact that...

HOT: I know this because...

## **EXPLANATION**

LEMON & HERB: The evidence I have discussed above proves my point as...

MEDIUM: This example proves my point because...

HOT: Therefore, this proves my point as...

## **LINK**

LEMON & HERB: All together, this answers the debate question asked by...

MEDIUM: This point answers the overall question because...

HOT: These ideas answer the debate as...



**Post your debate on  
social media!**

# SHARE YOUR VOICE

**We shout out the best opinions each week**

**#BIGDEBATECUB**

**TWITTER @SSCCTY**

**INSTAGRAM @SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS**



**[WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK](http://WWW.SMARTSCHOOLCOUNCILS.ORG.UK)**

# DEBATER OF THE WEEK

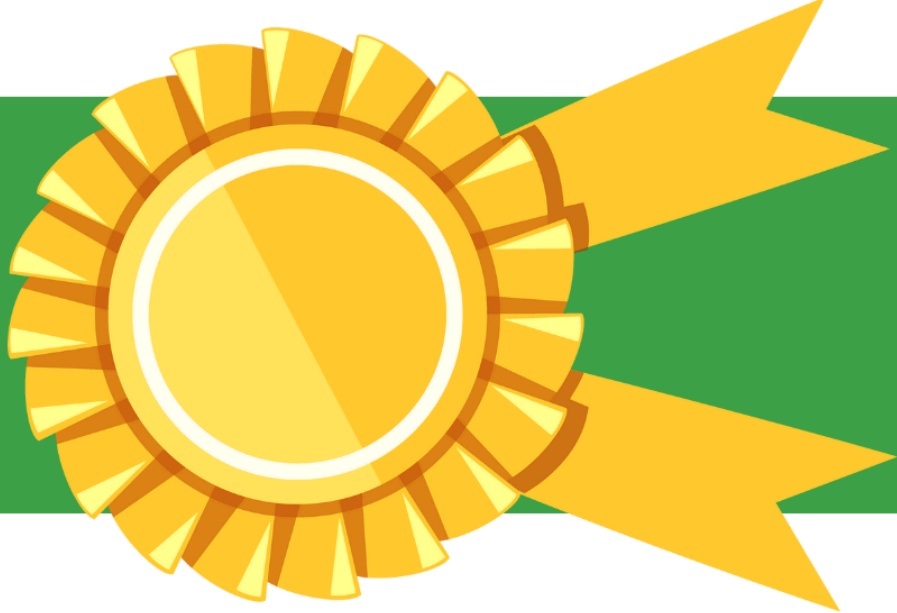
We are proud to present this certificate to...

For debating fairly, respectfully and persuasively. Well done!

*Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!*



Greg Sanderson  
Founder, Smart School Councils



Smart  
School  
Councils  
Community



# CLASS MEETING LEADER OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

---

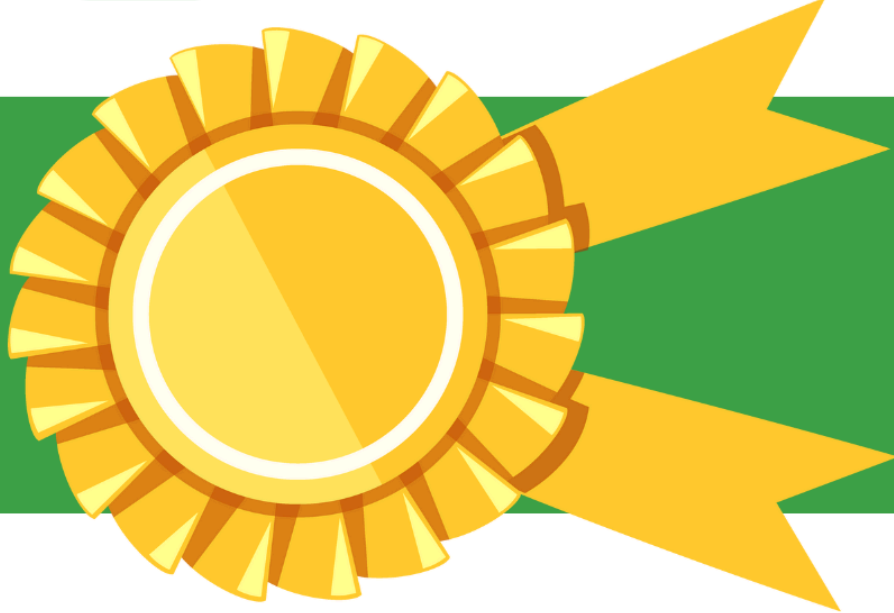
For showing skill and confidence in leading today's Class Meeting.

*Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!*



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



Smart  
School  
Councils  
Community



# BEST IDEA OF THE WEEK

We are proud to present this certificate to...

\_\_\_\_\_

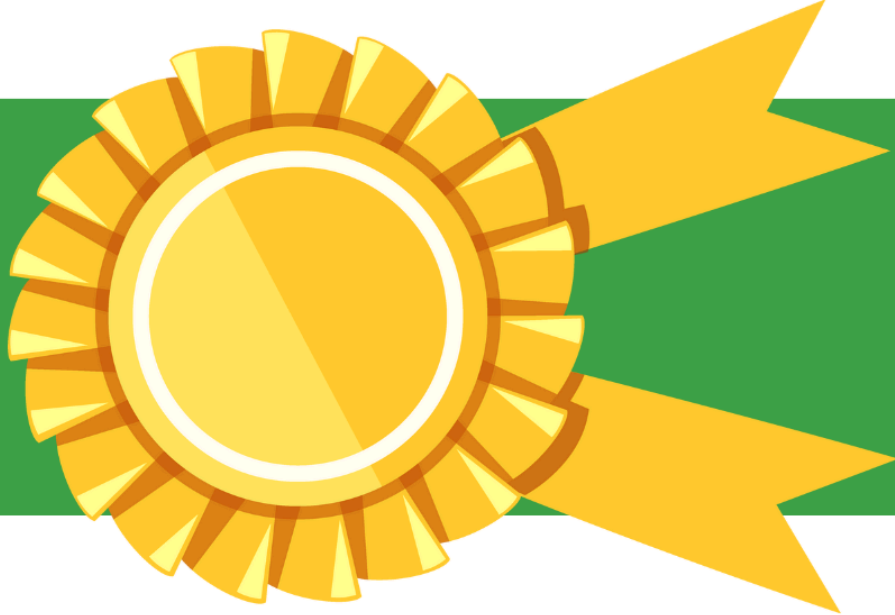
For speaking up with a great new idea on today's topic. Amazing.

**Share a snap or video @SSCCTY on Twitter for a national shoutout and a prize!**



Greg Sanderson

Founder, Smart School Councils



Smart  
School  
Councils  
Community

