

NATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL



HANDBOOK

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National Student Council is a program of NASSP
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ISBN 978-0-88210-376-1

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Welcome from the National Office

My years of school leadership regularly remind me of an abiding reality: Student voice is our nation’s most powerful force for social change. From schoolwide efforts to improve homework policies, to student-led community efforts to feed the hungry and clean local streams, to students in Florida leading a nationwide movement to prevent gun violence—students have been the catalysts for building the better world they would eventually lead.

NASSP is proud to have an active role in amplifying student voice and promoting student civic engagement. As the parent organization of National Student Council, NASSP has always sought to provide a schoolwide structure for empowering students. Through student councils, generations of students have identified their schools’ and communities’ most pressing challenges and have thoughtfully executed plans to involve the whole school in addressing those challenges.

Through National Student Council, schools and their student councils get vital support and resources to create an atmosphere of active engagement designed to improve a school’s climate and culture. These are the conditions to which every principal aspires, as they provide direct and significant benefits for student learning.

As you lead your student council this year, recognize that you participate in a deep tradition of working for a better world than the one you inherited. The generations that follow will be grateful for the work you do today.



JoAnn Bartoletti
Executive Director
NASSP

Welcome from the National Office

Thank you for your commitment to shaping tomorrow's leaders by serving as the student council adviser. Through your affiliation with National Student Council, you are signaling your interest in both modeling and supporting strong leadership development in your students.

As the nation's preeminent organization for leadership development, National Student Council exists to help advisers move their councils from effective to exceptional. This handbook is one vital tool you can use toward that goal.

Throughout these pages, you will discover guidance, resources, and support material to build upon and strengthen the values that act as the underpinnings of this organization: leadership, service, student voice, and engagement.

Many of the items in this handbook can also be found by logging in to the Adviser Resource Center on our website, www.NatStuCo.org. Be sure to use this handbook in combination with our website, our national magazine, and our e-newsletter to stay informed about options and opportunities to continuously hone your council's operation and leadership.

Always remember that your selfless dedication to your students and council will pay dividends for the future of your school and community.



Ann Postlewaite
Director, Student Programs
NASSP

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CHAPTER 1

National Student Council: A Timeline of Leadership

Millions have played a part, large and small, since 1931 in the history of National Student Council (NatStuCo) and making it the vital organization it is today. For members of an organization, understanding its history—just as family members should know their roots—helps define their place within it and gives them a sense of belonging to a program that is larger than their local activities.

National Student Council is a program of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). Because there is a great deal of history to cover and keep manageable, the history has been put into a timeline. All the people involved in the history of National Student Council have been dedicated to helping students make a difference in their schools; even those not mentioned in this brief history carried the belief that you are now entrusted to maintain.

Historical Timeline

1930–32: THE BEGINNING

At Sapulpa High School, near Tulsa, OK, Principal E.H. McCune gave the student council many responsibilities. To foster idea exchange and problem-solving, McCune and Sapulpa hosted the first central Oklahoma meeting for student council presidents. The student council president at Sapulpa, Warren E. Shull, was a teenager similar to those today. He had the idea, or vision, that this type

of meeting would be helpful at the state level.

His idea kept building, until he met Willis Sutton, National Education Association (NEA) president, at the Oklahoma State meeting. Sutton invited Shull to attend the NEA annual convention and to begin plans for a department within NEA for student government presidents. Shull traveled by train, with very little money, to the 1931 NEA convention in Los Angeles. There, he held the first national meeting of student officers—with nine people present.



Warren E. Shull
National Student
Council Founder

In 1932, Shull hitchhiked to the NEA convention in New Jersey. At this convention, the National Association of Student Government Officers (NASGO) was formally created and Shull was elected as president. Shull continued to foster the student organization while attending college. In 1936, the name was changed to National Association of Student Officers (NASO), and the group joined NASSP as part of the NEA at its headquarters in Chicago.

By 1936, Shull's perseverance and dedication to the student council idea and the early enthusiasm of other students, educators, and individual advisers had made great contributions to the survival and growth of the NASO. The NASO meeting in 1936 had grown to 200 attendees. Meetings continued to be held at the NEA convention until 1942 and the onset of World War II.

1935 The first magazine for student officers, *Student Leader*, was published. It was an eight-page magazine and was published monthly during the school year. In 1937, the publication changed its title to *Student Life*.

1940 NASO changed names again to National Association of Student Councils (NASC), and Grace Anderson of Grover Cleveland High School in Queens, NY, served as executive secretary of the organization. Anderson also was president of an advisers group, the National Association of Sponsors of Student Participation in School Administration, which was allied with NEA.

1942 Paul E. Elicker, National Association of Secondary School Principals executive secretary, became executive secretary of NASC. Walter Hess of NASSP was given the day-to-day operation of NASC on a part-time basis.

1943 NASSP became the sponsoring and supporting organization for NASC. For the first time in its 12-year history, NASC received full support from a parent organization. NASC, through its alliance with NASSP, found an even louder, more credible voice and grew to 200 member schools.

1947 NASC had grown to 1,900 member schools with 20 state associations and required a full-time director. Elicker hired Gerald M. Van Pool to serve as the first NASC director, a position he held for 23 years, until his retirement in 1970. Van Pool came from Wisconsin where he was executive secretary of the High School Student Council Association. As this was a new position, Van Pool had no guidelines or precedents to follow. To justify the position, NASC would have to provide talented leadership, help to determine the aims and objectives of the student council movement, and outline worthy projects and activities. As a practical matter, it would also have to build NASC membership to obtain operating funds for new services.

An advisory committee was selected by the NASC office, the state associations, and the NASSP Board of Directors to help establish goals, develop programs, and advise the NASC director.

Only 20 states had loosely organized state student council associations with widely varying names such as:

- Arizona Association of Student Body Governments
- Arizona Association of Student Officers
- Arkansas Association of Student Governments
- Associated Bodies of the Student Councils of Massachusetts
- Associated Student Councils of Massachusetts
- Colorado Association of High School Student Councils
- Connecticut Federation of Student Councils
- Federation of Oklahoma High School Student Councils
- Florida Association of Student Leaders
- Georgia Association of Student Governments
- Indiana State Association of Student Councils
- Maine Association of Student Councils in Secondary Schools
- New Jersey Association of High School Councils
- North Carolina Student Council Congress
- Pennsylvania Association of Student Participation in School Government
- Student Cooperative Association of Virginia
- West Virginia Student Co-Government Association
- Wisconsin High School Student Council Association

To help unify NASC, Van Pool asked that all associations use the name (State) Association of Student Councils. NASC offered its support and services to the state secretaries in an effort to encourage them to serve a minimum three-year term, thereby providing a stronger base for the state associations. NASC sent model state constitutions and a step-by-step procedure for holding a state constitutional convention to the states that did not have associations.

1948 After the war, NASC returned to holding an annual conference, this time on its own, instead of at the NEA convention. It was held at Coolidge High School in Washington, D.C., and was limited to 400 delegates. The responsibility for selecting conference delegates was given to the state associations.

1951 NASC continued to increase its services to

states and make student councils stronger. NASC collected valuable information on student council practices and procedures and reported them through articles and publications. Prior to these publications, little had been written about student councils. The articles gave the student council movement a sense of direction, explained the reasons for student council, and helped principals and council advisers fit student council into student activity programs.

1952 A small summer workshop was held at Camp La Foret in Colorado under the leadership of George Mathes. It provided valuable training in directing a student activity program. This workshop was to become the model for the annual National Leadership Camps.

1956 The International European Tours for International Understanding Program was initiated with a six-week tour of Europe. The tour was promoted by Van Pool for international understanding among students in various countries. The program, held every three years, continued until 1970.

1958 NASC wrote a new constitution, which became the first NASC constitution since the founding documents were created with NASGO in the 1930s. (Note: The latest revision was adopted in 2000.)

The Williamsburg Student Burgesses Program was held in cooperation with Colonial Williamsburg. The program was designed to bring together outstanding student leaders from each state, along with students from other countries, to share ideas and discuss national and world problems. The program thrived until 1971.

1959 NASC assumed control of the National Leadership Training Camp operating at Camp Cheley in Colorado.

1963 All 50 states had state student council associations providing such services as leadership workshops and an organization of statewide student council projects for member schools.

1970 Robert Fitzsimmons, principal of John F. Kennedy High School in Cedar Rapids, IA, was appointed director of the Office of Student Activities at NASSP, and he assumed the responsibility of managing NASC.

The NASC advisory committee structure was completely changed. One student and one adult (teacher or administrator), were selected by each region to sit on the committee. The committee would lead NASC and a national president would no longer be elected.

New goals were set for the National Association of Student Councils:

- Promote the activities of its members and its own office
- Serve as a communications link among member schools
- Represent NASC and its members nationally
- Work to develop other student organizations to meet more of the needs of local students.

1972 Robert Gaut from Louisiana was chosen as the new NASSP student activities director. NASC had a new direction: to stress leadership training and provide resources for member schools.

Two more leadership camp sites were added.

1974 Terry Giroux took over the reins as director of student activities. Giroux established a new direction for NASC, reflected in the title change of the activities magazine to *Student Advocate*. A more vital, more relevant NASC was the goal—to tackle topics discussed in the cafeteria, the halls, in student government meetings, and in the classroom.

The International Student Leadership Program took 100 U.S. students to five European cities to participate in intensive leadership training sessions in their shipboard classrooms.

1981 A new logo was developed for NASC in recognition of its 50th anniversary. Founder Warren E. Shull was on hand for the celebration.

National Leadership Camps now numbered seven, with five high school and two middle level camps offering leadership training.

1982 The NASC Advisory Committee was renamed the NASC Executive Board with a major revision of the constitution. Additional amendments were made in 1984, 1990, 1995, and most recently in 2000.

1983 The Division of Student Activities was formed within NASSP to provide comprehensive student activities services and manage the many associations and programs for members.

1986 Dale Hawley, a principal from New York state, became the director of the Division of Student Activities at NASSP.

1988 The publication for student activities was renamed *Leadership for Student Activities*.

1989 After founder Warren Shull's death, the Warren E. Shull Adviser of the Year awards were established to honor outstanding student council advisers at the state, regional, and national levels. The first recipient was Kay Baker of L.D. Bell High School in Texas.

1993 The first NASC area conference was held in Fairmont, WV. Area conferences were developed to enhance state programs, expand the outreach of NASC, and offer multistate experiences for those who could not attend the NASC national conference.

1994 Leadership of the newly named NASSP Department of Student Activities (DSA) and NASC was assumed by Rocco Marano, who had worked in DSA for 18 years.

1997 The first National Leadership Academy was held to bring state officers together for specialized training.


2005 NASC spearheaded a national effort for student councils to assist with relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast area of the United States.

2006 NASC commemorated its 75th anniversary with special activities and magazine features throughout the year. The anniversary was highlighted during the NASC National Conference held at North Penn High School in Pennsylvania.

2007 NASC refocused its vision, mission, and programming to better address the needs of student councils, student leaders, and student council advisers. The renaissance included a new logo, the NASC Distinguished Student Leader program, the National Councils of Excellence program, and the Raising Student Voice & Participation (RSVP) program. The new NASC programs and resources emphasized the roles and responsibilities of student councils for building student voice, service, leadership, civic engagement, and activities for all students in their schools.

2012 Ann Postlewaite became the director of student programs at NASSP. The Student Project Database was launched, giving members a single repository where they can search or enter successful projects by student councils.

2015 The national magazine for NASC advisers was redesigned and renamed *Advise*.

2017 NASC launched an ambitious enhancement initiative that included a new logo, new online programs and resources, and a name change to National Student Council (NatStuCo). 

CHAPTER 2

National Student Council in the 21st Century

The goal of National Student Council (NatStuCo) has been to help all student councils become more effective leadership organizations. NatStuCo represents middle level and high school councils nationwide and supports its members' efforts to build valuable leadership partnerships between students and their schools by creating opportunities for students to become effective leaders.

National Student Council's premise is that a student council is the one organization in a middle level or high school that exists to be representative of the student body and serve as the collective voice of the students. Student councils support the educational mission of schools through programming and sponsorship of activities and events that contribute to positive climate to foster academic and social growth. Student councils open doors for students to experience and practice democratic principles and learn the value of participatory citizenship. They are strongest when all students are encouraged to participate.

Broad student participation in school and community activities is an essential part of building a positive school climate, and student councils have the capacity to engage large and diverse student populations in their projects, activities, and events. NatStuCo delivers resources, training, and recognition that support the efforts of faculty advisers who have the responsibility to manage their student councils and foster the development of student council leaders.

Knowing that empowered students are catalysts for positive change in their school and community and that

student leaders have the responsibility to be positive role models, NatStuCo supports the belief that every secondary school (grades 6–12) should have a student council. The organization understands that student councils play a vital role in preserving knowledge of and practice in the democratic process and promotes that as a fundamental purpose of all student councils.

Leadership training is essential to allow developing leaders to achieve their full potential. Furthermore, student and adviser involvement in state and national programs enhances a local school's development of its student leaders.

To espouse its beliefs and to promote excellence in student council programs, NatStuCo identifies four tenets that provide focus to its efforts: leadership, service, student voice, and engagement. Together those tenets form the basis for National Student Council standards. NatStuCo has adopted clarifying points for each of the tenets to ensure a common dialogue for principals, advisers, and student council leaders to reflect on the roles and purposes of their own student councils.

Tenets of National Student Council LEADERSHIP

- Student councils set a positive course for others to follow.
- Student councils develop and expand leadership knowledge and skills in their members and other students.
- Student councils explore and practice democratic

principles, active citizenship, and provide opportunities for others to do so.

SERVICE

- Student councils strive to build an environment of caring through volunteerism.
- Student councils create opportunities for members to serve within the school and community.
- Student councils incorporate elements of service learning into their service activities to support improvement of students' academic strengths.

VOICE

- Student councils are the voice of their student bodies, serving as the link between the students and the school.
- Student councils create opportunities for every member of the student body to express his/her ideas, concerns, or opinions.
- Student councils share ideas, concerns, and solutions through positive communications.

ENGAGEMENT

- Student councils sponsor activities, projects, and events that are fully accessible and inclusive to all students.
- Student councils work to make every student feel welcome and a part of school life.
- Student councils foster a safe and inviting culture for all students.

Standards of National Student Council

National Student Council has established and maintains two sets of standards—one for middle level student councils and another high school councils and encourages its members to frame their programs and efforts with the goal of meeting the standards. The standards are promoted to councils through the NatStuCo National Council of Excellence Awards. NatStuCo member councils are encouraged to strive to meet the standards and demonstrate consistency of excellence by applying annually to earn a National Council of Excellence Award.

NatStuCo standards are also woven into the National Student Council Distinguished Student Leader program, which features a rigorous demonstration-based curriculum for high school student leaders. Whether done independently or integrated into a leadership class, the Distinguished Student Leader program challenges individual student leaders to explore leadership as it pertains to their own styles, levels of skill and knowledge, and philosophies. Those who successfully complete the program criteria earn national recognition from National Student Council and the National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Whether your student council is newly formed, has undergone a recent makeover, or has a long-standing tradition at your school, this *National Student Council Handbook* is an important resource to keep and refer to as your student council conducts its business and project activities. In the handbook, you will find numerous topics that are common to most every student council in both middle level and high schools as well as sample forms designed for use with a variety of student council activities, including calendars, meeting minutes, and committee reports.

The *National Student Council Handbook* should not stand alone as your only student council reference. Councils will get the most benefit by using the handbook in conjunction with other tools and resources that are available in the Adviser Resource Center at www.NatStuCo.org.

Beginnings

In examining the role of student council, it is important to look at how it evolved. Student councils grew out of a desire for students to participate in their education—desired by teachers and by the students themselves.

As early as 469 BC, Socrates involved students in the selection of some of the curriculum. Early attempts at student governance in the United States came from the colony of Virginia in the 1700s when the College of William & Mary in Williamsburg and the University of Virginia, founded by Thomas Jefferson, elected student representatives to a central body and indulged in aspects of self-government.

Shortly after NatStuCo became a program of

NASSP, the October 1944 edition of the NASSP Bulletin was devoted to student councils in the secondary school and included the following statement:

The development of any Student Council should be based upon a definite philosophy of democracy. It should truly be one of participation and sharing, a means through which students develop a belief in and an intelligent understanding and appreciation of our theory of democratic government and its processes. Here, certainly is an excellent opportunity for the school to be a laboratory of practice in democracy in which the school is the community of operation. It must be an essential part of the overall school program. (p. 21)

Giving Students a Voice

In order to host highly engaging activities and address relevant student issues, a student council needs to learn what’s on the minds of the students. The only way to do this is to ask them, listen, and then follow through on student’s suggestions and ideas.

RSVP is a program of National Student Council that allows all students to engage in a schoolwide process for leading positive change. Using a structured approach, RSVP’s framework revolves around three schoolwide summits involving the entire student body, which is engaged in “the conversation” about issues and challenges facing the school and/or community. Learn more at natstuco.org/rsvp.

Civic Engagement

In a 2006 study by the Case Foundation, *Citizens at the Center: A New Approach to Civic Engagement*, “civic engagement” was defined as “creating opportunities for ordinary citizens to come together, deliberate, and take action collectively to address public problems or issues that the citizens themselves define as important and in ways that citizens themselves decide are appropriate and needed”. The citizens of a school are the students as well as faculty members, staff members, and administrators.

Service and Service Learning

Student councils have been leading service projects for many years. Examples of service projects can be found on page 119 of this handbook. What is National Student Council proposing that is different?

TURNING SERVICE INTO SERVICE LEARNING

Most students and even many educators do not really understand what service learning is. They think it is just community service. But that is not the case. While the heart of a student council is expressed through its service projects, there can also be a curricular aspect to service. This value-added part of a service project is known as service learning. It makes service a true cocurricular activity and thus provides another link to the curriculum for student council.

For an activity to be a true service-learning activity, there is a process by which its impact can be maximized.

A typical clothing drive, for example, can be transformed from simply a collection of used clothes into an experience by which students determine and meet genuine human needs through planning and thinking.

This type of experience will increase the intensity of the experience for students and extend their academic bases through knowledge.

BENEFITS OF SERVICE LEARNING

Is it worth taking the extra time to make a service project qualify as service-learning experience? To help make your decision, consider data from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS).

CNCS developed a “Service Quality Index,” which rates “school-based service” on the level of service-learning elements:

- Student involvement in helping plan the activity
 - Students wrote or reflected on the experience
 - Students participated for at least one semester
- CNCS found that:
- 38 percent of youth or approximately 10.6 million nationwide, report current or past participation in school-based service.
 - Among students who participate in school-based service, whether currently or some time in the past, it was found that 10 percent, or an estimated 1.1

million, participate in service learning with all three of the quality elements, 26 percent with two of the elements, and 41 percent with one of the elements.

- Students who report current or previous participation in service learning with all three quality elements are more than twice as likely to report that their experience had a very positive impact on them than those youth who only participate in school-based service, 78 percent versus 36 percent, respectively.
- High school students, private school students, and students with higher academic achievement are all more likely to report current or past participation in school-based service and high-quality service learning.
- Youth who report current or past participation in high-quality service-learning activities are nearly three times more likely than those who engaged in school-based service with none of these elements to say that they believe that they can personally make a great deal of difference in their community—22 percent versus 8 percent, respectively.
- Current or past participation in school-based service has the strongest relationship with volunteering attitudes and behaviors among youth, followed by likelihood of voting regularly, interest in politics, belief in personal efficacy, and interest in current events.
- While youth from low income families are less likely to report current or past participation in school-based service, there is a positive correlation between their participation and volunteering attitudes and behaviors, interest in political and current events, personal efficacy, trust, and optimism.

(Source: Corporation for National and Community Service, *Educating for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-based Service, and Civic Engagement*, March 2006)

FOUR PARTS OF SERVICE LEARNING

Service learning is a process that features four basic stages through which students progress.

In the *preparation stage*, students take an active part in identifying needs, assessing their own group's skills

and talents, and developing plans that will be carried out in the next phase of the process.

During the *action stage*, students respond to the call of service. They use their combined academic skills and knowledge as they become active community members. Most activities fall into one of the three action categories:

- **Indirect service** activities provide goods or products to a needy cause, without students having direct contact with the beneficiaries.
- **Direct service** activities place students in direct contact with people in need, creating rich interactions and immediate feedback from diverse populations.
- **Civic action or advocacy** activities involve students in addressing the cause of a social issue, such as a voter-registration or drug-prevention campaign.

In the *reflection stage* of service learning, students explore their feelings about the service experience, and integrate that into empathy for others and a deeper sense of personal and community values. The method for reflection varies according to the actions students have taken and the creativity of the adviser. Methods that encourage students to reflect on their service experience include individual or group writing, small- and large-group discussions, role-playing, photo essays, poetry, art, journals, and music. Whichever methods are used, feedback to student council members in the reflection process acknowledges adviser support for their growth and development, helps students recognize their progress, and affirms the act of reflection.

In the *demonstration stage*, students take charge of their own learning—they process what they have accomplished, identify what they still need to know, and determine the next steps to take. Demonstration can take the form of a presentation, a newspaper article, or letters to community leaders.

While all student council service projects might not fit fully into service learning, the student council adviser will find that the model presents a format that can help student leaders select and more successfully develop even the simplest of service projects. See Appendix 4 for a list of service project ideas.

Student Council Today

What's different for student councils in the 21st century compared to 50 years ago? Our methods of communication, technology, school safety issues, the economy, globalism and diversity, and multiple demands on students' time and interests have influenced our day-to-day lives.

While planning social activities provides some good experiences in leadership—planning, organization, delegation, and communication—it also opens student councils whose only role is to plan activities to criticism that it does not represent the student body. As part of a well-balanced student council program, planning activities can be a positive role as long as the activities are designed to appeal to the largest possible audience? Many schools are very diverse. Are you recognizing that diversity? Are you asking students of all races and nationalities their interests in activities that student council could sponsor? 🍷

CHAPTER 3

Student Council 101: Getting Started

How to Start a Student Council in Your School

The student council is a school organization consisting of students elected by their peers to represent them, speak for them, and act for them. Student councils have proved an effective means for developing student participation in school activities and governance. They have been so effective, in fact, that today almost every middle level and high school has some kind of student organization, generally called a student council.

An effective student council is based on a democratic philosophy of education. A student council cannot succeed in an autocratic school environment in which the faculty and administration maintain all management and control of the school. Nor can it succeed under a laissez-faire policy that allows students complete freedom of choice without adult help or supervision. A successful student council philosophy respects the value of faculty and student participation in school management. For the staff, the student council represents a teaching device that is educationally sound; for the student, it represents a learning experience that is interesting, meaningful, practical, and teaches life skills.

STEP 1: THE STUDENT COUNCIL CONCEPT

One of the first steps in organizing a council is publicizing its potential advantages and showing there is a need for it. Obviously, a student council has a much better chance of success when students and faculty members express an interest in and desire for it.

THE STEPS TO FORMING A STUDENT COUNCIL

1. Lay the foundation: the student council concept.
 2. Do background research.
 3. Attend student council conferences and workshops.
 4. Visit schools that have student councils.
 5. Write to other schools for information.
 6. Contact NatStuCo and your state association of student councils.
 7. Secure faculty and parental cooperation.
 8. Appoint a committee.
 9. Involve all students in planning.
 10. Write and adopt a constitution and bylaws.
 11. Obtain approval.
 12. Get underway.
 13. Evaluate.
-

Students need to be shown the value of a student council and helped to understand the advantages of actual participation in school management.

The faculty members, in turn, should recognize the educational value to be gained through student participation in decision-making. It is essential that the faculty members clearly understand and agree to the desirability of student participation and not merely go along with the idea because of pressure from a well-intentioned principal or the wishes of an eager student body.

STEP 2: DO BACKGROUND RESEARCH

If there appears to be some interest in organizing a student council, those who are to be involved should read a variety of relevant literature. Numerous magazine articles have been written on the subject of student participation in decision-making. In addition, many books have been written about all phases of the activity programs, and there are many websites relative to student council and student government that are worth visiting.

STEP 3: ATTEND STUDENT COUNCIL CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS

Every state association of student councils may hold local, district, or state meetings. In large general sessions, small active-learning groups, and exchanges with experts, students and advisers can receive help and advice on almost any phase of student council operation.

During the summer, national and state workshops draw students to a college campus or a summer camp for intensive study of student council concerns and leadership training. In regular classes, taught by experienced student council advisers and school administrators, delegates learn what must be done to have a successful student council.

STEP 4: VISIT SCHOOLS THAT HAVE STUDENT COUNCILS

Students and advisers interested in setting up a student council in their school should arrange to visit other schools that operate successful student councils. Advance planning by students and the principal

is fruitful for those who are to make the visit. After the visit, they should immediately discuss what they have seen and learned. Teachers, administrators, and fellow students should join in these discussions.

STEP 5: CONTACT OTHER SCHOOLS FOR INFORMATION

If it is not possible for student groups to visit a variety of schools to see how various councils operate, they should identify other schools that are about the same size as their own, in the same kind of community, and likely to have about the same kind of student body.

Then contact the student council adviser in each school to request a copy of the council's constitution, an outline of the council setup, a short description of the school community itself, and a copy of the past year's annual report, if they have one. Many schools have a website that can be used to gather such information. A school should accumulate and study as much of this material as possible in preparation for writing its own constitution.

STEP 6: CONTACT NATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL AND YOUR STATE ASSOCIATION OF STUDENT COUNCILS

National Student Council is an organization of middle level and high school student councils in the US and abroad. NatStuCo is a program of NASSP and is administered by the NASSP office of Student Programs in Reston, VA.

Most states have an active, functioning student council organization that is ready to help any school that requests assistance. These organizations offer a wide variety of activities including workshops, conferences, and summer leadership camps. A current listing of the name and email address of each state's student council director is available on the NatStuCo website at www.NatStuCo.org.

STEP 7: SECURE FACULTY AND PARENTAL COOPERATION

When organizational plans are being made, it's a good time to develop an understanding of the proposed project and to secure cooperation. The plans must be

publicized to faculty members and parent groups to provide information and to gain input. Involvement in the planning process fosters understanding and cooperation throughout the development of a student council organization.

STEP 8: APPOINT A COMMITTEE

The principal should appoint a committee to make plans and draw up procedures for the establishment of a student council. Students and faculty members should be on the committee. Planning that involves students, faculty members, administrators, and community members can develop a solid basis for cooperation when it is time to prepare specific recommendations for the actual establishment of the council.

STEP 9: INVOLVE ALL STUDENTS IN PLANNING

When making preliminary organizational plans, keep in mind that the student council will belong to the entire student body and not just to the members or promoters of the new organization. Suggestions from all students should be encouraged, and when a tentative outline or plan of action is ready, it should be submitted to the student body for suggestions. Student council is more than a specialized club; it represents and serves the entire student body.

For the student council to be successful, everyone in the school must know what is being done. Plans should be publicized through assemblies, homeroom discussions, the school paper, and any other means available.

The goal of steps two through nine is to devise a model for the school's student council and a plan for implementing it into the school's structure. These ideas take shape in the constitution and bylaws of the student council.

STEP 10: WRITE AND ADOPT A CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Finally, the time comes to try to put the ideas that have been gathered into some kind of operating patterns. This means writing a constitution for the council.

A student council constitution is a written docu-

ment that sets forth the fundamental laws and principles under which the council operates and is organized. The constitution deals with general purposes and outlines the council's organization and administration.

Most parliamentary experts now combine the constitution and bylaws into one governing document. Here, they are presented separately and can be used together or individually.

A constitution should be tailored to the particular group for which it is intended. The basic principles of a constitution, however, are the same for all groups. Here is an outline of the fundamental provisions needed for a constitution. A constitution:

- States the name of the organization
- Outlines the general purposes of the organization
- Lists the membership qualifications and election procedures
- Discusses meetings in general
- States the source of parliamentary authority and details who may veto proposals or actions of the organization
- Outlines adoption and amendment procedures

The constitution should be written in general terms that can be clearly understood. Sentences and articles should be brief, simple, and clear. Only those items that will help the council to accomplish its purposes should be included.

Bylaws were designed to supplement the constitution and contain more specific information. Some student councils handle all details of their operations through their bylaws. Each council must determine how detailed and formal their bylaws should be. The bylaws, because they are specific, will need to be changed over time. Generally, the following items should be included in the bylaws:

- Description and responsibilities of officers
- Installation procedures
- Amount and procedures for dues
- Names and general purpose of committees
- Adoption and amendment procedure for bylaws
- Procedures for filling vacancies and removing members from office

STEP 11: OBTAIN APPROVAL

The first draft of the proposed constitution is prepared and submitted to the student body and faculty for comments and suggestions. A second draft will probably be necessary, incorporating as many ideas as are practical and acceptable. The final draft should be simple, clearly stating the rules and regulations by which the student council is to be organized and containing specific directions for the orderly conduct of business. The final draft should be presented to the school for a vote of acceptance.

STEP 12: GET UNDERWAY

The committee appointed to establish the council should start preparing for elections according to the new constitution. Upon election, the new officers should set up the first official student council meeting. The agenda of the first meeting should include an official welcome to the officers and members, review of duties, review of committees, and discussion of council projects and activities. You are now off and running.

STEP 13: EVALUATE

Evaluation is an ongoing process, but it is especially important during the council's first year. To be effective, a student council must constantly seek to evaluate in order to improve, grow, and serve the student body to the best of its ability. At the end of the first year, the original establishment committee should evaluate and should seek input from the entire student body, faculty members, and administrators.

Types of Student Council Organization Models

There are several main types of student council organizations, some more traditional than others. Brief descriptions of eight models are given below. There are advantages and disadvantages of each. Rarely do they appear in pure forms, but in various combinations.

1. HOMEROOM REPRESENTATIVES

This assumes that the school has a homeroom-type unit from which students are selected for student council. It generally consists of one or more representatives

from each of these units. Often, the representative is the homeroom president, although another student can be elected to serve on the student council. Councils formed on this basis have many advantages.

Advantages

- Every student is represented on the council because every student is in a homeroom.
- There are direct lines of communication between the student and the student council as the homeroom usually meets every day or at least every week.
- The homeroom then becomes the clearinghouse for council business and every student can assume some amount of responsibility in the work of the council.

Disadvantages

- In a very large school with many homerooms, homeroom representation can become too large and unwieldy. If the school has more than 40–50 units, some modification of this plan should be considered.
- Many schools today do not have a homeroom period. Here again, the system must be adapted to circumstances. Popular substitutes for homeroom would be to select some other type of unit within the school that all students must attend some time during the week or minimally the month, e.g., first-period classes.

2. CLASS AND STUDENT BODY SCHOOL OFFICERS

Essentially, such a council consists of the student body officers and the officers from each grade level. In many cases, it also includes such ex officio members as the editors of the school newspaper and the yearbook.

Advantages

- The council will be relatively small, making it more manageable.
- This type works well for small schools and multi-graded schools that have only one or two sections in each grade level.
- Other club officers may be included as ex officio members.

Disadvantages

- Lines of communication between the individual students and council will be difficult to maintain in larger schools.
- In many schools, there are generally few meetings of any class, other than the senior class, and thus there are infrequent opportunities for the give and take necessary for a successful student council operation.
- Some students serve on the council by virtue of their positions in other organizations, rather than by a selection process. But, as has been pointed out, student council members and officers should be elected to their positions.

3. THE MODIFIED GOVERNMENT

This model is patterned after the federal, state, or local government. Many times the three branches of government are represented: executive, legislative, and judicial. The executive branch is represented by the school officers who are elected by the entire student body. The legislative branch is usually divided into two houses, upper and lower. Requirements for membership are generally greater for the upper house than for the lower house. The judicial branch is frequently represented by some form of student court.

Advantages

- Students gain a greater working knowledge of governmental procedures.
- It most accurately represents our adult government.
- Students may focus on one of the three specific branches of government.

Disadvantages

- The projects are not necessarily like those of government and thus there is little reason for a student council to be a replica of a government.
- The machinery for getting work done is cumbersome and complicated; it usually takes many weeks before action can be secured on even the simplest project.
- Few schools have student courts and those that do exist tend to be outside the area of student activities and student council.

4. THE CLUB COUNCIL

The club council model generally consists of the presidents or representatives from each club and organization within the school. Such a council elects its officers from its own members. This was a popular form of student council many years ago when club programs were at their height but there is little to recommend this format now.

Advantages

- Officers are elected from the council membership, which keeps group numbers consistent year to year.
- Clubs are represented equally on the council.
- Conflicts of group activities are reduced due to better communication between clubs.

Disadvantages

- It does not represent the students fairly unless every student belongs to one club or organization, which is rarely the case.
- Some students belong to two or more clubs and so, in effect, have more representation on the council.
- The council tends to be concerned primarily with those problems that affect clubs or organizations and fails to address concerns or problems of the entire school.

5. THE MULTICOUNCIL

As the name implies, this model consists of more than one council operating with the school. For example, some high school councils are divided into upper (junior/senior) and lower (freshman/sophomore) divisions. Each of these divisions has its own council made up of representatives from the smaller units within the division. There is also an executive or coordinating committee composed of the officers of the two divisional councils, who relate and coordinate the practices and policies of the two houses. In other schools, each grade has its own council, again with some form of executive council coordinating the work.

Advantages

- This model has been used with some success in very large schools or in schools that operate on

more than one campus to involve the greatest number of students.

- Having divisions allows for flexibility in developing meeting schedules.
- Each grade level has equitable representation on the coordinating boards.

Disadvantages

- A divided student council tends to divide a school as well, and council business becomes class business instead of school business.
- Projects and activities are usually for a particular class rather than the whole school.
- The model is used primarily in schools that find it administratively impractical to organize any other way.

6. THE TEAM COUNCIL

The team council model is used in schools where the faculty is arranged into teaching teams and, along with students, essentially form smaller learning communities within the larger school environment. Each team selects representatives to serve on an executive board of officers that also includes students selected in a general election.

Advantages

- Each team is guaranteed representation on the council.
- Student numbers on the council can be kept manageable.

Disadvantages

- Some teams will have extra representation due to the membership of the student body officers on particular teams.
- Depending on student enrollment, one grade level may have more or less representation than another.

7. OPEN MEMBERSHIP

Some student councils are opening up membership to anyone who is interested and wants to be involved. Students join via a simple application, or by demonstrating commitment through participation.

Advantages

- More buy-in to council activities
- Allows for diversity
- Provides for plenty of students to assist at activities

Disadvantages

- Too many people at council meetings

8. THE COMBINATION

It is not always possible or desirable to have a council that strictly represents a specific model. In most schools, it is best to develop a council plan that represents a combination of several models—a compromise that includes the best features of each.

No matter what kind of organization is finally decided upon, these three general rules apply to all cases:

- The council must be based on a democratic philosophy that respects the value of each individual. The democratic process should be open to all, based on a “one person, one vote” philosophy, and operate based on the rule of the majority.
- The council should be developed to fit local conditions and needs. The council should meet, represent, and recognize the diverse elements of the student body.
- The council should represent the combined thinking of students and faculty members over a long period of time. Faculty members should help students develop the leadership.

Practical Questions and Answers

HOW LARGE SHOULD THE COUNCIL BE?

The size depends on the size and administrative structure of the school and the nature of the community served by the school. As a general rule, the council should be large enough to represent every student and yet small enough to be manageable. Size should also reflect the parameters dictated by available meeting space and scheduling and depends on the council design set forth in the constitution. Numerous council models exist with membership numbers ranging from 15 to 80. In many schools, the best size is roughly that of the average class.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS SHOULD EXIST FOR MEMBERSHIP AND OFFICERS?

The membership policy should be open. Student councils should seek to include all students at some level of membership. The successful council depends to a large extent on the leadership of its members and officers, who should be well-qualified to carry out the work of the council. However, there is a distinct difference between qualifications for membership and eligibility restrictions placed on officer candidates. Student councils should have minimal restrictions for students to qualify as officer candidates. Candidate eligibility should be an attainable goal and clearly stated in the bylaws. It may be better to risk letting a person run than to exclude him or her from the election.

HOW WILL COUNCIL MEMBERS AND OFFICERS BE SELECTED?

All members and officers should be elected or appointed by fellow students—not appointed by the principal or faculty members.

Student council members generally do not represent the entire school but smaller segments of it, such as a club, organization, classroom, homeroom, or grade. Various methods of election or selection can and have been used, all with advantages and disadvantages. Some of these methods include:

- Nomination by petition
- Nomination from the floor
- Nomination by committee
- Nomination by virtue of position (this is the least-recommended option—just because someone is president of a club, for example, does not mean he or she is the best qualified for student council)

Student nominees should be permitted to campaign within definite, well-established limits. The purpose of the election is to put the best-qualified person into office.

There may be some positions on the student council—such as committee chairs—that do not require election but a simpler selection process to involve more students. Each school must decide which method will work best for its situation. No matter what process your school decides to use, be sure that campaign

and election policies and procedures are clearly and thoroughly covered in the student council bylaws.

HOW SHOULD THE FACULTY BE REPRESENTED?

The student council is a student organization made up of students elected by their peers. The student council adviser or advisers should be the only faculty members overseeing the council, but the council should develop a strong working relationship with other faculty members. The election or appointment of other faculty members to the student council is to be discouraged. If faculty involvement is deemed necessary, consider instead a faculty advisory group that meets regularly with council officers.

WHAT SHOULD BE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE COUNCIL AND THE FACULTY?

The student council and faculty should work together to improve the school. Encouraging faculty members to participate in council work or projects and inviting them to attend meetings will help promote mutual respect and understanding. Student council members should continually seek help and suggestions from faculty members.

HOW SHOULD COMMUNICATION WITH THE STUDENT BODY AND FACULTY BE ESTABLISHED?

A weakness of many student councils is a lack of communication among the council, the student body, and the faculty. Two-way communication must exist between the student council and the student body as well as between the student council and the faculty and administration. Each student should have the opportunity to express ideas and make suggestions to the council. This can be accomplished in many ways and all available avenues should be used. The RSVP process (see page 7) is an excellent way to do this.

HOW OFTEN AND WHEN SHOULD THE COUNCIL MEET?

Meeting frequency varies from school to school. Some councils find it best to meet once a week. In a large

school or with a very active council, meetings are held every day as part of a special class. When it is determined how often to meet, meetings must be regular and not on an “as needed” basis.

The council should meet during the school day, on school time, whenever possible. Scheduling is a complex issue with which the school administration must deal. Meetings planned as part of the educational program of the school will ensure full attendance, produce better results, lend prestige to the council, and cause fewer class interruptions.

Several methods have been used to accommodate council meetings during the school day:

- Using a rotating schedule, e.g., meeting first period one week, second period the next, and so forth
- Shortening class periods one day per week to gain time for an activity period
- Using the homeroom time
- Meeting during lunch periods
- Replacing the homeroom period with an activity period
- Providing student council as an elective class
- Modifying of an adviser’s schedule and duties
- Holding before- and after-school sessions

The non-school-time meetings present problems, especially for students who have jobs after school, who are responsible for younger siblings, or who rely on school transportation.

Here are the advantages of scheduling periods during the regular school day:

- All students may participate, including those with jobs, those who use school transportation, or those who have other out-of-school restrictions.
- Faculty advisers are able to manage their activity within the regular school day.
- Coordination and evaluation of the activity period is easier and the school can control the number of activities in which a student participates.

Meeting length should also be considered when scheduling student council meetings. A minimum of 40–45 minutes is recommended to conduct most meetings. Special committee meetings and work sessions held outside the school day normally require varied amounts of time.

WHERE SHOULD THE COUNCIL MEET?

Ideally, the council should have an assigned area or room that can serve as an office or small meeting room. Large council meetings with the student body should be held in large rooms such as the auditorium, gym, or cafeteria.

WHAT AUTHORITY SHOULD THE COUNCIL HAVE?

The student council involves the entire student body and, therefore, is the most important student organization in the school. This does not mean that it is independent of faculty and administrative control or supervision. All council powers and authority are derived from the principal or his or her acting designee. The principal can, when she or he deems it necessary, veto any act of the council. However, if the council responsibilities and activities are clearly outlined and defined, the principal should have little need to do so.

When evaluating areas of authority in school management, there are three options to consider:

- The council may be granted almost unlimited authority to act, such as student forums, assembly programs, social functions, and projects.
- There is shared authority among council, faculty, and administration, such as those above, plus fundraising or community service.
- The council has no authority but it could be involved, such as school administration, policies that will affect students, faculty hiring, and program evaluation. Students could be invited to provide input and suggestions through the student council regarding such areas.

WHAT RELATIONSHIP SHOULD THE STUDENT COUNCIL HAVE WITH OTHER SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONS OR CLUBS?

The student council should coordinate its activities with all other school organizations or clubs. The principal determines which organizations and clubs may be established within a school and may use the student council to gather information and reactions from the student body on the creation of a new organization or club before making a decision. There should also be represen-

tation by other clubs on the student council by way of direct membership or an interclub committee. This will facilitate communication and calendar planning for better support of each group's projects or events.

HOW WILL THE COUNCIL FINANCE ITS ACTIVITIES?

The student council, like every other student organization, needs funds to carry on its programs. Funding can come from several sources:

School funds: Many schools budget money to supplement the student council activities. This helps the student council focus its efforts on its primary goals rather than on repeated fundraising.

Fundraising: Student councils can carry out fundraising activities (see page 127 for ideas). All fundraising projects must conform to existing school policies.

Contests, socials, or spirit events: The student council can charge fees for dances, shows, carnivals, etc. These fees can be used to recoup costs or also to raise funds.

Care must be taken to keep accurate and up-to-date financial records. The student council adviser, treasurer, and school accountant or bookkeeper should meet monthly to review the account. The treasurer should prepare monthly reports to share with the membership during council meetings. Electronic record keeping is recommended.

WHAT PROJECTS OR ACTIVITIES SHOULD THE COUNCIL SPONSOR?

A busy student council is usually successful, but it should be busy doing something constructive and significant. The student council should be the source of leadership in school activities, enjoying prestige among students, faculty members, and the community.

There are hundreds of different projects and activities that student councils can and do sponsor. (See Appendix 4.) Council projects and activities are most effective when planned to target a specific area or group of people or to achieve specific goals. Many times they are directed to one or more of the following:

- **Students:** Activities to benefit, involve, and celebrate students

- **Faculty/staff members:** Activities that assist, recognize, and support their efforts and achievements
- **Community:** Projects that benefit the community and strengthen the school-community ties
- **School:** Projects that foster caring attitudes and help create a more favorable learning environment for students and faculty members

The council should meet to discuss its projects for the year. It must give careful thought to the appropriate time and money to be spent on an activity and then create a calendar of events. Tentative dates must be checked against the school's master calendar to avoid conflicts.

In undertaking activities, the council should keep in mind the following considerations:

- **Significance:** Activities and projects should have purpose and should help students, the school, or the community. They should be relevant to the school and council goals.
- **Scope:** Most projects should be completed within the school year, as interest decreases if the project takes too long.
- **Motivation:** Projects should be interesting so students will remain motivated to complete the task successfully.
- **Involvement:** Projects should be planned to involve as many students as possible, including non-council members.
- **Success:** Projects should have a good chance of success. This should not mean, however, that the council should never take on a difficult project. Frequently, the successful completion of a difficult project increases a council's stature and members' confidence in their abilities.

HOW DOES THE PRESENCE OF A STUDENT COUNCIL BENEFIT THE ENTIRE SCHOOL?

As a cocurricular activity, a council can serve to support the goal of teaching students to be responsible and fulfilled human beings, providing them with opportunities that develop character, critical thinking, sociability, and civic responsibility.

In addition to your student councils, your school's clubs, teams, honor societies, and performing and visual arts groups all have the potential of meeting these goals. Because participation in these cocurricular activities can be so influential in a young person's school career, a high school should seek to engage as many students as possible in cocurricular activities, following a philosophy that students will miss a valuable part of their education if they do not participate.

These concepts are equally valid at the middle level. Participation in student activities has been shown to improve attendance, increase students' academic achievement, and promote higher aspirations.

Student activities also offer sound alternatives to illegal drug and alcohol use.

Summary of Recommendations

- The council size should be large enough and contain sufficient diversity to represent every student, yet be manageable.
- Qualifications for membership should be developed to ensure effective leadership within the council; however, exclusive eligibility restrictions should be avoided.
- The student council is a student organization whose members are selected by their peers.
- A faculty adviser should be appointed by the principal to supervise the student council.
- The student council and the faculty should respect and understand each other and should work together for the improvement of the school.
- Effective two-way communication between the student council and the student body and between the student council and the faculty should be established and regularly maintained throughout the year.
- Student council should meet regularly and, whenever possible, during the school day for a period of time sufficient to address business and issues brought forth from a written agenda.
- Student council should be assigned an area suitable for use as an office and/or secure storage of materials and records. A regular meeting area should also be designated.
- The powers and duties of the student council are founded in the constitution and are derived from the principal or acting designee. Such authority is placed into three categories:
 - a. The council might be granted almost unlimited authority to act.
 - b. The council shares authority with the faculty and administration.
 - c. The council has no authority but provides input.
- Student council may be involved with the process of chartering other student organizations and maintaining a comprehensive student activities calendar.
- Funding for student councils can come from a combination of sources, including, but not limited to, school activity funds, sales, contests, and events.
- All projects and activities sponsored by the student council should be well-planned, provide models of effective leadership, and be relevant to the educational mission of the school.
- Student council elections should be designed to promote democratic principles and demonstrate fair and consistent operations. The selection of students to the council should support local and educational philosophies and promote the mission of the school.
- The organization and purposes of the student council should be developed to best meet the needs of the school and should be described in a way that is easily understood by both the school and the community.
- Student councils should evaluate each project or activity. In addition, council members should regularly evaluate the council's overall performance and solicit input from the school community. 🔥

CHAPTER 4

Student Council Operations

A student council is a group of students elected by their peers according to an adopted constitution. Every student in the school has an opportunity to have a voice in student affairs through a representative member of the student council. In schools today, student council is generally the only group of democratically elected representatives from the student body as a whole.

A student council will provide an effective voice for students only when it:

- Makes a commitment to represent all students in the school
- Has a clear perception of its role within the total school program
- Defines its objectives in such a way that they can be understood and accepted by students, faculty members, and administrators—if the understanding and acceptance are mutual, there is no limit to the contributions that students can make to their education through the student council

To represent the students of the school, councils must be involved in various types of projects. Projects may be social or service-oriented in nature, but there must also be projects that emphasize the development of communication between the council and various professionals throughout the school system. This is crucial to the council's efforts to represent students because it allows information to flow among all members of the school community. It also develops students' leadership skills and enhances the school's educational purpose.

The council should work to understand the attitudes, beliefs, and goals of the students and develop

an ability to present student perspectives in appropriate ways. Developing this understanding and ability can be difficult because many officers and representatives are new to their positions each year. However, the difficulties are lessened considerably by the student council adviser. As a faculty member, the adviser gives the council an important perspective on student problems and attitudes. Furthermore, because most advisers serve for several years, they can also give valuable advice gained from the experiences of previous years.

Working With the Student Body

Even though the council is composed of students elected from the student body, members should not assume that they automatically represent the student population. Accurate representation is not a simple matter. For instance, the members of a council tend to be outgoing and active in student organizations while maintaining good grades. Obviously, there are many students whose attitudes toward and involvement with school are very different from those of the typical council members. This does not mean that councils cannot represent these students; certainly, they can. But they must continually work at it.

At the beginning of each year, the council should set specific goals for the upcoming year. A mission statement would be appropriate to consider. If the members of the student council know what they want to achieve, planning will be more productive and problems can be more easily addressed.

Good representation comes through a year-long effort in five basic areas:

- Maintaining an open membership policy

MIDDLE LEVEL MEMBERSHIP POLICY

Although student council is an organization of and for the students, there are still those who perceive the council as “elitist” or “restrictive” in nature, especially when a council fails to include others in all phases of the council’s duties. In such cases, the council has failed to meet the basic philosophies of the middle school concept and the purposes of student council itself. Middle level student councils should be constitutionally open to participation by all students. Council members can involve others by inviting them to help plan projects, serve on committees, or participate in council events.

-
- Scheduling a wide variety of activities and projects
 - Developing effective communication with students
 - Maintaining a respectable council image
 - Participating in educational and community meetings

Maintaining an Open Membership Policy

Keeping membership open is essential if students are to feel ownership in the council as “their” organization. The council’s encouragement, combined with nonrestrictive rules for participation, can increase student interest and participation and thereby improve representation.

Councils can encourage broad student participation by:

- Keeping all committee memberships open to anyone in the school and actively recruiting members from the student body
- Not allowing discrimination in the election processes

- Holding business and committee meetings in locations and at times easily accessible to students, including during school hours, if possible, so students with transportation limitations can participate
- Minimizing or eliminating grade requirements for membership in the council
- Actively recruiting members from all student groups to achieve diversity of views

Scheduling Activities

Social activities, educational programs, and service projects should be included in a representative council’s plans.

Spirit/Social activities provide opportunities for students to get together with friends, meet others, and develop social skills. Many of a school’s social activities are shaped by tradition. Dances, spirit days, class competitions, and homecomings are typical social events.

Educational programs are designed to contribute supplemental information to regular courses or offer ideas or skills that are not ordinarily covered in the curriculum. These programs can take many forms, including speakers, forums, leadership lock-ins or workshops, clubs, field trips, once-a-week special interest classes, and one-day or weekend retreats. It is important to remember that academic and personal interests vary and that some programs will appeal to only a small number of people.

Service projects can be designed to benefit the school (e.g., cleaning, buying new trophy cases, painting the hallways and bathrooms) or the larger community (e.g., collecting food and clothing for people in need, working with senior citizens or at daycare centers, volunteering for other causes).

Developing Effective Communication With Students

Planning and carrying out effective two-way communication is the most important of all the activities the student council undertakes. Not only must a council know what interests students have, it must inform students how the council selects and plans projects that

MIDDLE LEVEL SCHEDULING ACTIVITIES

Whenever possible, middle level student councils should try to schedule activities during the school day or immediately before or after school. This will make the activities accessible to students who are restricted by school transportation or parental schedules and would otherwise be unable to participate. To avoid disruption of class time or schedules, student councils might consider holding lunchtime activities.

meet their interests. Councils must examine how they convey information to the student body and how they obtain their information about student interests.

To encourage two-way communication between councils and students, councils may:

- Have a scheduled time and place where representatives report to their constituency
- Work with the school faculty to arrange class study on topics of student interest or concern
- Use unique forms of publicity, including creative announcements, eye-catching posters, pins, websites, email, etc.
- Hold assemblies to publicize special events
- Have frequent, open student council meetings
- Regularly have representatives ask their constituents for ideas and opinions (see RSVP on page 7)
- Establish standing committees to handle long-term student concerns
- Publish a student council newsletter or have intraschool email or a student council webpage so students can check activities and meeting minutes
- Be sure that representatives follow through on suggestions from their constituents
- In addition to regular meetings, hold open, informal

discussions and forums (without using parliamentary procedure)

- Have officers periodically visit homerooms to talk with the students
- Encourage participation from the diverse school population
- Design and use an effective evaluation instrument for representatives
- Use public opinion polls
- Have frequent meetings of all school club officers or representatives
- Make sure the council is aware of the needs of all students

Earning Students' Respect

To be effective, the student council must earn the respect and confidence of the student body. Students need to feel that the council is responsive to their wishes and that representatives are able to handle their many responsibilities.

The degree of respect and confidence students have in the council is closely related to the council's image. Each year, council members earn that image. To an extent, a council inherits the image of past councils, but it can be changed if the council feels it necessary and works toward change.

The council's image comes from many factors, including the kind of motions it passes and the kinds of dances it holds. No single activity and no one person determine the council's image; yet, each activity and each council member certainly contributes to its development.

To develop a good image, a student council should do the following:

- Avoid an elitist or cliquish image, including having secret jokes or special greetings for council members only or always sitting together in the cafeteria.
- Actively and sincerely solicit student opinion.
- Increase personal contact between students and student council officers.
- Recognize, respect, and encourage the work of other student organizations in the school.
- Make sure that open council meetings are well-planned and publicized.

MIDDLE LEVEL EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Middle level student councils, like their high school counterparts, must develop strong lines of communication with the student body, faculty, staff, administration, and parents to get the most participation for their efforts. To best accomplish this, student leaders need to investigate what media are available at the school, including video and computers. But remember that communication is most powerful when it includes two-way personal dialogue. Besides developing creative ways to keep others informed, student councils must also use forums for students and staff members to share their ideas and concerns with student leaders.

-
- Publicize the positive actions and activities of the council.
 - Have a committee to deal with student suggestions, questions, complaints, etc.
 - Ensure the school newspaper or website includes important council business and activities.
 - Respect council privileges by using hall passes and class excuses for their proper purposes, maintaining an orderly council room, and being attentive during council meetings.
 - Welcome new students to the school.
 - Through various activities, continue to improve the school and community.

Participating in Educational and Community Meetings

In its efforts to represent the students, the council will sometimes send representatives to civic meetings and educational policy board meetings. Many of these groups have student advisory members. The students

who attend these meetings must be of outstanding caliber because the adult members of the community may see these representatives as speaking for “all students.” Attending these meetings is very important because many civic and educational groups take actions that affect students’ lives.

The student representatives should do the following:

- Serve as spokespersons for the council and the students.
- Attend important civic and educational meetings, especially if asked to do so by adult members of those groups.
- Fulfill all responsibilities they agree to take on for these adult groups.
- Be ready to admit that they don’t know all the answers.
- Inform the students and other council members about what happens at these meetings and take suggestions from students to future meetings.

Working With the Adviser

The adviser is a faculty member appointed by the administration to work with the student council.

The job is a demanding one, requiring both a personal time commitment and knowledge of the workings of the school and educational system. Although advising students has rewards and frustrations, the role of an adviser overall is gratifying, and dedicated advisers are certainly essential to successful student organizations.

The adviser, perhaps more than any other person in the student council, is aware of the various perspectives of students, faculty members, and administrators. The relationship between advisers and student councils is complex because it includes formal, organizational elements as well as personal interactions.

SOME FORMAL RESPONSIBILITIES OF ADVISERS

- Guide and offer suggestions to students.
- Encourage students to be thorough and accurate in fulfilling their responsibilities.
- Accompany student council members to various meetings held outside school.

- Report to the faculty on the activities of the council.
- Check that committees are meeting their responsibilities and deadlines.
- Help students work through any major disagreements that might undermine the council’s ability to function.
- Teach skills and concepts that will enable student leaders to better fulfill their obligations to the student body.
- Maintain accurate records to help smooth council operations and as reference for any future advisers.
- Assist students with budget planning.
- Attend student council functions.
- Oversee all correspondence to community organizations, ensuring that the council is acting within its scope of authority.
- Help maintain and improve the general management of the council.
- Supervise students who are using school equipment.
- Find a medium between having fun and fulfilling the many responsibilities of the council.
- Strive to improve the school and community.
- Teach leadership skills.

Along with these formal responsibilities, advisers must be aware of their personal roles in guiding students. Students are affected not only by the adviser’s words and actions, but also by more subtle things like voice intonation, facial expression, and enthusiasm—or the lack of it. Advisers impact not only the student council organization, but also the attitudes and feelings of the student council members.

Working With the Principal

The principal is the most important person in the management of the school. The student council must keep the principal informed about its actions at all times. It must realize that, as a result of the educational and legal obligations the school has to its students, a principal must maintain the final approval authority for all projects and events.

The principal’s broad perspective on education and knowledge of the school can be a valuable resource to student councils. A healthy principal-council

working relationship helps make the responsibilities of both easier to fulfill.

TIPS FOR WORKING WITH THE PRINCIPAL

- Invite the principal to all business meetings.
- Inform him/her of all motions the council passes and all activities the council wishes to sponsor.
- Consider the principal a resource.
- Make the principal aware of student opinions, perhaps through a student advisory committee or by membership on a school decision-making group.
- Respect him/her as a professional educator in all council communications and, therefore, do not put them in an unfavorable light in any correspondence or action of the council.

Working With the Faculty

Faculty members provide extensive resources for students. Through their professional skills and personal interests, teachers can enhance the learning environment of students in many different ways, both in and out of the classroom. A council is indeed wise to develop a strong working relationship with the school’s faculty.

To enhance this working relationship, the following are options to consider:

- Invite faculty members to council meetings.
- Establish regular discussions with faculty members.
- Place copies of meeting minutes in all teachers’ mailboxes.
- Ensure that student council members don’t consistently miss the same classes.
- Welcome new faculty members to the school.
- Provide student aides to help teachers a few days before school begins.
- Rotate responsibility for chaperoning activities among as many teachers as possible.
- Sponsor teacher recognition and appreciation projects, have an occasional morning brunch for the teachers, and remember teachers on holidays.
- Prepare brief biographies of teachers and publish them, once approved, in the school newspaper.

Working With the School Board

As students become interested in and involved with various aspects of the educational process, many councils come into contact with local and state school boards. Professional educators realize the value of student input and many council members express student viewpoints by serving as advisers to school boards or school policymaking committees.

PRESENTATIONS TO THE SCHOOL BOARDS

Research is an important key to the success of any work that students do for a school board. Students must be completely prepared for presentations because they may encounter opposition on issues from teacher, administrator, or parent groups or from members of the board itself. If students present well, they may be invited to serve on committees that develop policies.

Students may also have contact with the numerous

SPEAKING AND PRESENTATION GUIDELINES

1. Research the topic fully, including the aspects that may be counter to student viewpoints.
2. Determine how the group runs its meetings by visiting a meeting prior to the speech or presentation. Do students need to notify any officials in advance of their wish to offer opinions or present testimony?
3. Find out if others are scheduled to speak at the same meeting. What kinds of questions might the board members ask the student representatives in light of the other speakers?
4. Explore the composition of the committee or group that makes final decisions and recommendations on the issue. What questions will they have for the students? Can their present attitudes be determined in hopes that the student representatives can offer proposals that will be acceptable to the members and also beneficial for the students?
5. Know the points about which students feel strongly. If students want a complete change in a policy, what kind of compromises would be satisfactory, if any? Could a small concession now lead to more concessions in the future?
6. Be aware of the importance of personal appearance. Will what a student representative wears hinder or enhance the audience's willingness to listen?
7. Distribute copies of the statement or proposal to the group being addressed. Will members need a copy of the student position to recall what was said, or will a summary suffice?
8. Maintain good eye contact when speaking.
9. If possible, use visual aids to dramatize points.
10. Be courteous, no matter the situation.
11. Allow time to answer questions that may be raised by the presentation.
12. Document as much information as possible, both in the presentation and in the written material to be given to the group.
13. Listen carefully to questions; avoid answering questions that are framed to place the student position in an unfavorable light, no matter how the reply is stated. Example: "If this board passes an open lunch policy, will students continue to disrupt the school?" When preparing for the meeting, anticipate difficult or negative questions and rehearse responses.
14. Consider media coverage and its appropriateness for the situation.

long-term planning groups in school systems that design ways to implement educational policies and directives. These groups determine the content of courses, grading systems, course offerings, etc. Obviously, students can provide valuable insight.

If students are asked to speak before such committees simply to inform the members about student attitudes, there may not be as great a need for extensive preparation. However, students who are asked to be full members of committees that are developing proposals for educational change must do a considerable amount of research.

Working With Parent Groups

A student council officer should attend all parent-teacher association, parent-teacher-student association, or other school-based parent support group meetings. The assistance of parents is extremely important and sometimes vital to student council projects. Parents can act as chaperones and sources of assistance and information. Many of the items set forth in “Working With the School Board” also apply to parent groups.

The student council does not stand apart. To function effectively, it must work cooperatively with all the groups in the school community. 🔥

CHAPTER 5

Constitution and Bylaws

A student council constitution is a written document that sets forth the fundamental governing laws or principles under which the council is organized and operates. To many people, the word “constitution” implies formality and intimidating rules and regulations. A constitution is simply a written set of rules for a group. The constitution defines the limits of authority of the organization and gives a sense of order and purpose for conducting business.

A student council’s constitution should be stated in simple, easily understood language and should include only essential items.

Bylaws are rules adopted by a group for its own meetings or affairs. Bylaws cover such areas as the number of members needed to constitute a quorum (minimum number of members to vote on an issue or proposal), procedures for filling an office that has been vacated during the year, and procedures for impeaching delinquent members and officers.

The constitution and bylaws should be designed to help the council accomplish its goals. They must not be so difficult to follow that they hinder the effective functioning of the council. Most parliamentary experts now combine the constitution and bylaws into one governing document.¹

Elements of a Constitution

Most student council constitutions do not have a

preamble. The document contains the basic principles under which the council is organized and operated. Most constitutions and bylaws follow a generally accepted form. First, most have articles. These articles follow a logical sequence and each discusses one broad area. Generally, the following topics are articles:

- The name of the organization
- The general purpose of the group
- Powers vested in the organization; the right of veto by the principal
- Definition of membership for the group, qualifications of membership, duties of membership
- Establishment of the time, methods, and procedures for nomination and election of members, officers, and advisers
- The duties and responsibilities of the organization, the officers, the members, and the adviser
- Description of standing committees and provisions for the formation of special committees as the need arises
- Frequency of meetings and provisions for special sessions
- Method and procedure for ratification of the constitution, provisions for amending the constitution
- Parliamentary authority

When it becomes necessary to discuss more than one topic in any one article, it is proper to number

¹ This document reflects the use of the general term bylaws for a document that combines both a constitution and bylaws. For a discussion of the use of the term bylaws, see *Robert’s Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 2000 Edition*.

these and refer to them as sections. Each section also has a title for quick reference.

Writing the Constitution

Creating a constitution can be a difficult, time-consuming process. The following steps can take some of the hassle out of the process and ensure that your group develops a constitution that is an accurate reflection of its mission.

RECOMMENDED STEPS

1. Gather ideas and information from group members, faculty members, administrators, and constitutions from other organizations. At this stage, use a constitution survey to gather ideas from your organization's members. (See example in the sidebar.)
2. Review the gathered information. It can be tedious for a group of 25 members to pore over the information, so a smaller committee is recommended. You might want to have a constitution committee or a group of officers compile the information.
3. Decide the basics of your constitution. Decide what your constitution will consist of. Think of broad, general topics at this point rather than specific rules and regulations. For example, you may decide that your constitution will outline the duties of officers, attendance policies, etc.
4. Decide the basics for each part of the constitution. You don't necessarily have to use complete sentences and ornate language. Rather, concentrate on putting down in writing what each topic will consist of. For example, list the duties of each officer.
5. Edit the constitution. Smooth out the rough edges and write everything out in complete sentences. Use a dictionary and thesaurus to help select the right wording.
6. Seek feedback. To make sure the constitution is clear and easy to understand, get the feedback of the entire organization. You might also seek feedback from the adviser, principal, English or journalism teacher (for clarity of writing), or other students who are not involved in the organization to get a fresh perspective.

CONSTITUTION SURVEY

To complete this survey, divide your group members into groups of three or four. Each group should discuss the questions and complete the survey together.

Indicate the names of members in the group:

1. The name of our organization is:
2. The purpose of our organization is:
3. The titles of membership for our organization are: (Examples: president, adviser, member, representative, etc.)
4. The duties and responsibilities of these members are: (Take each title from question 3 and list that member's responsibilities.)
5. The methods of becoming a member in our organization are: (Example: methods of election, other ways to join, etc.)
6. What percent of our organization's members should be at a meeting in order for us to have a quorum to conduct official business—50 percent, 70 percent, 85 percent?
7. Should we have an attendance policy for our meetings, activities, and events? If so, what should it be?
8. What standing committees should our organization have?
9. Should our constitution have provisions for impeaching or removing unethical or delinquent members from our organization? On what grounds can members be removed and what process should be taken to remove the members?
10. What other ideas do you have for the constitution?

Source: [Nebraska Association of Student Councils summer leadership workbook](#).

7. Ratify (vote to adopt) your constitution. Vote on each part of the constitution separately so members will know which parts they agree on so they can be adopted as is. The group will also know which parts need to be discussed further. If necessary, continue to edit the constitution until ratification is completed.
8. Distribute copies of your constitution to all members, your adviser, faculty members, administrators, and any other interested students.
See Appendix 3 for a sample constitution.

sometimes occurs when an old document has been added to and amended over a period of years.

- They contain elements that have caused longstanding disagreements.
- They violate individual rights.
- They prevent the council from adapting to change.
- They do not align with or they violate school/district policies or rules. 🚫

Changing the Constitution

Once the constitution and bylaws have been accepted by a student body vote and approved by the administration, they become the basic law of the organization. If this principle is adhered to, it is only changed when necessary.

Every constitution should include a description of the procedures for amending the articles and bylaws. It is good practice to have the entire school—faculty members as well as students—review proposed changes before they are put to a vote or adopted.

Occasionally, the constitution and bylaws may have to be revised or completely rewritten. The revision is usually drafted by a specially appointed constitution/bylaws revision committee.

After a change has been proposed and a draft has been prepared, the student body should be given copies so they can review and discuss the issues before they come to a final vote. Proposed amendments or revisions usually require a two-thirds vote of the student body for adoption.

Some councils are criticized for spending too much time amending their constitutions and bylaws instead of dealing with student concerns. However, there are times when an outdated constitution or set of bylaws is a real hindrance to the council. NatStuCo recommends that councils make a thorough review of their constitutions every 3–5 years. Some good reasons for amending a constitution or bylaws are the following:

- Statements no longer suit the school situation.
- Articles and bylaws are arranged so poorly that essential information is hard to find. This situation

CHAPTER 6

Election Process

One of the cocurricular aspects of student council is that students learn about the democratic process by practicing it. Just as the U.S. Constitution and each state's constitution specify the procedures and qualifications for elected officials, so too should the student council constitution and bylaws. Councils that don't carefully control the election process to ensure fairness for all candidates and promotion of the democratic process open themselves and their school to possible criticism from students, faculty members, and parents.

During officer and representative elections, all eyes of the school are focused on the student council—its achievements and shortcomings, its issues, its personalities, and its image. At election time, the council stands or falls on its record. Elections are a good time to think about the future of student council at your school. What can be built upon and what should be discarded? While there is no need to reinvent the wheel, it's not a bad idea to look at the procedures you use with an objective eye. Is there room for improvement?

Ask yourself the following:

- Does the election process give everyone a fair chance to be elected?
- Are several qualified candidates likely to run for every office?
- Are election rules fair and impartial?
- Is anything done to encourage minority students or underrepresented portions of the student body to run for election?
- What is done to ensure the integrity of the ballot?
- What is done to ensure that qualified students who

MIDDLE LEVEL ELECTIONS

Middle level schools are sometimes nontraditional in their educational practices when compared with high schools.

They follow a unique set of educational philosophies resulting in a variety of methods for selecting student council members and officers. While most schools use some form of elections, others include student council as an elective in exploratory programs.

A number of middle level schools that have teaching teams or smaller learning communities have adopted a town council or caucus structure whereby team representatives run local meetings and serve as liaisons to an executive board.

lose the election are encouraged to stay active in the group?

Carefully considering all aspects of the election process may reveal areas that need improvement. Plans for rectifying deficiencies should be established well before you begin the election season. An election committee made up of students who are active in your organization, a few faculty members, and a representative from

MIDDLE LEVEL CAMPAIGNING

In middle level schools, campaigns are wonderful opportunities for students to challenge their creative talents and persuasive abilities. Working from thoughtfully planned, age-appropriate guidelines, the pressures and competition of campaigning can result in positive, lasting experiences for young leaders.

To ensure that campaigns result in positive learning experiences, middle level councils can take several actions. The first and most important step is to create an equitable set of campaign guidelines that will allow any student to be competitive in the election process. This involves removing any cost considerations or other significant burdens that would be placed on the students running for offices. The distribution of flyers or other “treats,” although effective methods for winning votes, are considered inappropriate campaign activities for middle level students in some schools. Another strategy to consider is limiting the number and size of campaign posters for each candidate, encouraging students to use their creativity.

a parent organization can be helpful in planning new procedures. It’s also a good idea to publish general election procedures in the student handbook.

If your council doesn’t currently have an election file with copies of previous years’ campaign rules, filing dates, candidate information, and other materials, consider starting one. It will be an invaluable help in future years.

Nominations

Many methods exist for candidates to register to run for office. The nomination process should be simple

enough to enable candidates representing any element of the student body to run for office. Most important, it should be the students’ process, with only minimal guidance and involvement from the faculty or administration, and it should be clearly explained to all interested students.

The nomination procedure has two main purposes:

- It requires each candidate to have some initial show of support.
- It adds dignity to the election process by making prospective candidates work for the privilege of being elected.

Nomination Methods

The nomination method the council decides to use must be clearly stated in the constitution and bylaws. The process should be publicized thoroughly, including the exact deadline for nominations to be submitted. A candidate information meeting is a good way to ensure that all candidates receive the same information. Hold the meeting during the school day so no students with after-school obligations are left out. Explain the qualifications for candidates, distribute the election timeline and rules for campaigning, and provide any other necessary information.

POSSIBLE METHODS OF NOMINATION

- **Self-nomination:** This method is the simplest; a person declares him or herself to be a candidate and registers at some designated location and time.
- **Self-nomination with support petitions:** In this process, a person officially becomes a candidate when he or she submits a petition with a certain number of supporter signatures. A supporter can only sign for one candidate per office. If a supporter signs for more than one person who is seeking the same office, the supporter’s signature is eliminated from all petitions for that office. The candidacy of the office-seeker is not affected unless the elimination of the signature lowers the number of supporters below the minimum number required for candidacy. This requires careful checking of all petitions. If your school is very large this may not be feasible.
- **Petition method:** A certain number of signatures

automatically elects a person to the position of representative.

- **Faculty endorsement:** This method works with any of the above methods with the additional requirement that each candidate receive a certain number of signatures from faculty members.
- **General membership:** Nomination is made from within the general membership of the student council membership.

Campaigning and Campaign Rules

During a specified campaign period, each candidate tries to demonstrate to fellow students the wisdom of voting for him or her. A candidate gathers friends and

supporters to help make posters, distribute campaign materials, and talk to fellow students, encouraging them to vote for their candidate. The campaign period should be long enough to give candidates an opportunity to effectively publicize their objectives, but not so long that the election loses focus. One or two weeks are usually sufficient. To help ensure fairness to all candidates, set a dollar limit on campaign expenditures. Or make organization supplies available to all candidates for creating posters, flyers, buttons, and other campaign materials.

Campaigns should be informative. In conjunction with the voter education program, or just as a service to students, the student council should provide a voter's guide. This could be a display in the cafeteria or

MEET THE CANDIDATES

For various reasons—including not wanting to take time out of class and inappropriate audience behavior—many schools no longer conduct election assemblies with formal speeches by the candidates as part of their election procedure. If your school has moved away from having election assemblies, consider one of the following alternate methods of allowing voters to become familiar with the candidates:

- Make a video of the candidates giving a short speech and answering questions. Encourage home-room teachers or social studies teachers to show the video to their classes.
- Devise a plan where one candidate per day gives a quick speech

in the morning announcements or on the video announcements. Draw numbers to determine the order, and don't have any speeches on the day of the election.

- Create an informative video of the candidates and the issues and play it in the cafeteria during lunch periods.
- Televisе a debate between candidates for council president. Simulate the national presidential debates with a panel of journalists—your school's newspaper and yearbook editors—asking questions. This could be broadcast live with an audience made up of student council members or taped and shown before and after school, at lunch, or another convenient time.

- Take a photo of each candidate and have him or her fill out an information sheet with qualifications, plans if elected, and answers to a few general questions. Create a display in a prominent place or on a website with the photos and the biography information of each candidate.
- If schedules allow, have candidates visit classrooms to give their speeches and answer questions. Teachers could sign up if they are interested in having the candidates visit.
- During lunch the day before the election, have an open candidates' forum or debate. Voters can come to hear the candidates talk and answer questions.

MIDDLE LEVEL SPEECHES

The pressures of giving a campaign speech in front of the entire student body can be overpowering for middle level candidates. Scheduling a time for the assembly may also be difficult. Many middle level schools now record candidate speeches and play them via their closed-circuit systems.

Besides reducing the candidates' stress, it also gives the principal and faculty members flexibility in determining when the speeches will be viewed. Another method that puts candidates face-to-face with the students is the use of team or class forums. These forums provide the candidates with a smaller, less intimidating audience.

other frequently visited spot, a piece that is printed and distributed, or material posted on the school's website. Information might include photos of all the candidates with their names, qualifications, and what they hope to accomplish if elected. (See "Meet the Candidates," on the previous page, for other ideas in this area.)

Personal contact as well as posters and flyers are necessary to win an election. This exposure is not limited to the candidates but to student government as a whole. The council has an obligation to the candidates and the school to ensure that fairness and good taste prevail during the campaigns. Setting campaign rules and guidelines will help meet these obligations.

Speeches

An important part of an all-school election procedure is an opportunity for candidates to present themselves in person and deliver a speech to voters. This element is sometimes left out due to time constraints or inappropriate audience behavior, but it is a worthwhile part of the process and should be included if possible.

Some schools have adopted a lunchtime speech format, which presents special challenges for the speakers who must compete for attention with voters' meals and friends. A candidates' forum held before or after school is another option, but candidates will not reach all voters in this format. If your school has a closed-circuit television system, speeches could be prerecorded and televised to classrooms.

The method most frequently used is grade-level assemblies where candidates for that grade's offices speak to their peers. Candidates for all-school offices travel from assembly to assembly to present their speeches. Candidates for each office can be introduced by the previous officer or by a faculty or student council moderator.

The candidates should be given a clear set of rules to follow for their speeches, including a time limit, with the understanding that a serious violation of these rules could result in the termination of the speech by a proctor from the administration or faculty.

A serious violation of rules might be the use of slander, falsehood, or profanity. In some schools, speeches are previewed by a faculty member or the student council adviser. This gives the teacher an opportunity to help the student develop an effective speech and can head off possible content problems.

The speeches should provide a fair opportunity to all candidates to express their opinions honestly. Because of the possible legal implications of any kind of interference, the adviser and principal should establish a workable policy for each school regarding the content of a particular speech in advance of the assembly.

If there are a large number of representatives' positions, it might be impractical for all candidates to give speeches. Alternative methods of informing the school about their qualifications and ideas should be designed. One alternative method might be to publish a "qualifications and ideas" information sheet, in which candidates have an opportunity to express themselves. This information sheet could be distributed to the voting students or posted on the school's website.

Suggested Rules for Campaigning and Speeches

It is important to establish clear rules for election

campaigning and speeches. The rules established at your school will depend on current situations and longstanding traditions. For example, perhaps the school has been newly painted and posters cannot be hung on the walls. Whatever rules are finally established, a meeting of all the candidates should be held to explain the rules and answer questions. All candidates should be required to attend. (If nomination petitions are used, this meeting might be the appropriate time for candidates to turn them in.) In setting the rules, make sure adherence to them can be verified by the campaign rules committee.

EXPENDITURES

- The cost of campaign materials should not exceed \$_____.
- A financial statement of expenses should be required.

POSTERS

- Poster size may not exceed _____ square feet (e.g., 3' x 5').
- Candidates may display up to _____ posters (e.g., three, five, etc.).
- Posters must be approved and signed by the stu-

TIPS FOR WRITING A SUCCESSFUL CAMPAIGN SPEECH

1. Make notes about the points you want to make.
2. Avoid promises that are impossible to keep.
3. Make commitments that are achievable. Devise a plan that you can and will complete if elected. Point out problems for which you have solutions.
4. Design and incorporate a campaign slogan that is short, catchy, and memorable.
5. Communicate or demonstrate that you know the duties of the office you are seeking.
6. Make sure the information you include in your speech is accurate.
7. Be sincere, honest, and interesting.
8. Avoid rambling. Listeners enjoy clear speeches with a purpose.
9. Include your name and the purpose of your speech, but don't use them in your opening sentence.
10. Get the attention of your audience by posing a startling question. Use an appropriate quotation or story.
11. Include in the body of your speech your qualifications, why you seek this position, and your plans and goals if you are elected.
12. Don't put down or be negative about other candidates. Stand on your own merits. Market yourself.
13. Make every word count. Use powerful words. Avoid repetition. Be concise.
14. Be yourself, be original, and be creative.
15. Be enthusiastic, positive, and conversational.
16. End your presentation with a memorable statement.
17. Write out your speech and give it to someone to critique. Rewrite your speech.
18. When the final draft is written, highlight key ideas on index cards. Include stage directions. If you have a tendency to speak too fast, write a reminder to "slow down." Write or type in large print.
19. Practice your speech. Practice some more. Practice again in front of a mirror.
20. Take your speech seriously. If you don't, why should anyone else?

dent council adviser or campaign rules committee and hung only in designated areas of the school.

- Candidates are responsible for the removal of their own posters the day following the election.

HANDOUTS

- Buttons, flyers, or other printed materials must be approved by the student council adviser or campaign rules committee and distributed only in designated areas and/or at specified times. Distribution of campaign materials must not disrupt classes.
- Buttons, flyers, or other printed materials must be in good taste. Those having slogans, sayings, phrases, pictures, or inferences related to alcohol, drugs, sex, or other inappropriate matter will not be approved.

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA

In recent years, more students have taken their student council campaigns online where they can reach more students and showcase their creativity. For schools, the use of the web and social media during student council elections has resulted in the need to revise campaign guidelines to include this medium. It is important for student councils to determine if they are going to allow online activity to be a part of student campaigns and, if so, what the rules and parameters will be.

Examples of campaign rules pertaining to online activity include:

- The student council allows each candidate to post a campaign message and brief bio on the council website. Candidates must use the information form provided and submit completed forms to the adviser by the deadline.
- Students may only post approved campaign messages on the student council and school webpages. This includes students working as campaign officers or in other capacities on a student campaign.

Election websites often include space where candidate bios and campaign advertising can be posted with council approval.

CONSEQUENCES OF CAMPAIGN VIOLATIONS

The student council should establish clear conse-

quences for violations of the campaign rules. No matter what consequences are selected, they must be approved by the student council adviser and the principal to ensure that they are fair and appropriate. The consequences of campaign violations should be included with the written campaign guidelines and explained during the candidates' meeting.

Sample Rules to Govern Speeches

- Speeches shall be given in an elections assembly (or other designated time and place) only.
- All candidates will have an opportunity for themselves and/or their campaign manager to speak.
- Time limit for speeches is to be ____ (e.g., three minutes).
- Speeches must be positive and in good taste, with no reference to alcohol, drugs, or sexually related material. No profanity or obscenities will be allowed. Speaking at the assembly is a privilege.
- Literature may be distributed in the auditorium as students leave the assembly.

THE ELECTION PROCEDURE

Some schools use both a primary and a general election to select council officers. A primary election is held to reduce the number of candidates to two. The general election selects one of those two candidates to serve. In the general election, the winning candidate must have one more vote than 50 percent of the votes cast, while in the primary election each of the two winning candidates must receive a plurality—each must receive more votes than any other candidate.

The use of write-in votes is discouraged for student council elections as the prequalified candidates have completed or met the requirements set forth by the council to seek office.

The time of the elections for officers may differ from the time of elections for the representatives. Many officers are elected in the spring prior to the school year in which they are to serve. Representatives are typically selected soon after the start of the new school year. There are advantages and disadvantages to these four schedules.

MIDDLE LEVEL ELECTIONS

Where middle level schools are served by feeder elementary schools, students in the entry grades probably will not have established who their leaders are in the early fall. For this reason, student councils that have fall member elections or selections may want to schedule some orientation sessions with that group to help them understand student leadership and the characteristics of a leader prior to the elections. Another strategy might be to visit the feeder elementary schools to introduce student council to the students before they enter the middle level school.

One possible combination of spring and fall elections is to hold the elections for the upper grades in the spring and the incoming grades in the fall. The best solution, of course, would ensure representation for all student groups according to their numbers.

REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS IN THE SPRING

Pros

- The council can plan during the summer.
- Council members can participate in state and national summer leadership training programs.
- The council can start immediately in the fall.
- Incoming students can hold representative elections while still in their feeder schools; each feeder school elects a number in proportion to the percentage it contributes to the total class composition in the fall.

Cons

- Administrators may have difficulty predicting the scheduling arrangements for the following fall, which has implications if representatives are selected from

subject classes or homerooms.

- A representative may be assigned to represent a group whose attitudes are significantly different from his or hers.
- Homerooms, social studies classes, etc., are prevented from directly choosing their representatives.
- New students or students from private schools transferring in won't have an opportunity to be involved in the election process.

REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS IN THE FALL

Pros

- Each homeroom or class can select its own representative.
- Fall elections eliminate the possibility that elected representatives will have moved.

Cons

- Several good candidates may exist in one homeroom or class, but only one can be chosen. (One way to avoid missing several good candidates is to have each class elect its representatives at-large. Elected representatives are then assigned to represent a particular homeroom or class.)
- The council can't do any organizing over the summer, a limitation on early fall projects.
- Good candidates might be in classes with students from different feeder schools whom they don't know.

REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS AT MIDYEAR

Pros

- The council can evaluate its progress during the summer and make plans for the coming semester.
- January and February are less busy than fall or late spring months in most schools; the new officers and representatives can use this slow period for planning the second semester.
- Representatives and officers who will graduate in the spring can help their successors during the first semester of their term.
- For seniors, ending a term of office at midyear means less pressure as graduation and career decisions approach.

Cons

- The change of representatives at midyear may make following through on projects somewhat difficult.
- A midyear election campaign may be disruptive to academic studies and to other council activities.
- Some projects may be overlooked or forgotten during summer vacation.

OPEN ELECTION BY PETITION

Under this method of selecting representatives, a certain number of people sign a petition stating that the candidate is their representative.

Pros

- Students can join the council any time during the

year (unless a rule exists to the contrary).

- Supporters can remove their names from the representative's petition if they are dissatisfied with his or her performance on their behalf. If the number of representative's supporters falls below an established number, the representative loses the council seat. Representatives may be reinstated if they can bring the number of signatures back to the required level.
- People can select representatives from different classes or homerooms who hold ideas similar to theirs.

Cons

- Communication to students is difficult, as constituents are scattered throughout the school.
- Old members might not know new ones.

REDUCING THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF ELECTIONS

Elections have a positive effect on the winners but can be extremely disappointing for those who were not elected, sometimes causing them to stop participating in the council. It does not have to be this way. With a bit of consideration on the part of the adviser and the newly elected officers, those not elected can remain vital members of the student council.

1. Tell candidates the results of the elections in private, before announcing the results to the entire student body.
2. Refer to the new officers as "those who were elected" and to the defeated opponents as "those

who were not elected," rather than winners and losers.

3. Conduct officer elections separately from representative elections. This gives those not elected another opportunity to become participating members.
4. Do not publish the final vote tallies. It doesn't help anyone to know that he or she lost by only three votes or 100.
5. Congratulate each candidate in writing and thank him or her for participating. It is especially meaningful if this letter comes from the principal; however, it is also nice to have a letter from the student council adviser. Remind

those not elected that they don't have to have a title to be a leader in the school.

6. Encourage elected officers to appoint those who were not elected to committees and commissions. They have shown interest in council activities by campaigning and should be kept involved.
7. The adviser might want to suggest to those not elected that they take a leadership class, if one is available.
8. Perhaps extend the privilege of membership automatically the following school year to the candidates not elected.

- Representatives who enter halfway through the year have a lot of catching up to do.

Voting Procedures

Voting is a privilege and now is the time to show students how important it is to cast a ballot and to take part in our nation's democratic process. Simulate local, state, and national elections by holding voter registration one week before the elections. Use a class roster to register students by having them sign next to their typed names. Ask them to sign again when they receive their ballots.

Care should be given to ensure the integrity of the balloting. No student council wants to call into question the result of an election by opening itself up to charges that the vote was tampered with. Conducting the vote itself is another area in which a variety of practices are used, depending on the needs of the school. It is important for a council to provide reasonable voting opportunities for everyone who is eligible and wishes to do so.

USING VOTING MACHINES

Many councils use voting machines as part of a citizenship training effort, since the machines are the same ones used in public elections. The companies or municipal agencies that control these machines must be contacted months in advance of the election, and the deadlines they establish to receive the names of the candidates (to place them on the machines) will influence the time schedule the council sets for the primary and general elections. A phone call and follow-up communications to the local board of elections are essential.

The voting machines are simple to operate, but their operation is new to many people. Therefore, time should be allowed for explanations of how they work. Each machine requires an attendant to periodically check inside the machine to make sure that it is functioning properly and that the names have not been tampered with. Several other people will be needed to check students' names off the school list as they vote.

Voters should be required to show positive identification, such as a school ID card, at the registration table, at which council members will have alphabetized

lists of the students. As a person's name is checked off the list, the voter should receive a card that cannot be duplicated. The voter then gives the card to the booth attendant immediately before entering to vote. These "voter cards" must be carefully watched to prevent people from voting more than once.

A council must be very conscious of how long the polls are to be open and allow ample time for all who wish to vote to be able to do so. You do not want people to avoid voting because they are rushed for time.

At the end of the day, the total number of people who voted (according to a count taken from the lists) should match the total count of voters taken from the recorder on the voting machine. The process of checking the number of votes cast, as well as the tabulation of the votes, can be watched by representatives of the candidates, in case there is a discrepancy that might require a revote.

To prevent one person voting twice, voting by both machine and ballot would not be allowed.

BALLOT VOTING

Ballot voting must be handled very carefully, since it is easier to vote incorrectly by ballot than by machine. One basic rule for ballot voting is to minimize the number of people who handle the ballots before, during, and after the voting.

Some schools conduct all-school votes in homeroom or another designated period of the day. In this case, survey the teachers before election day to determine the number of ballots they need for each grade level in their class that period. On election day, deliver packets to each teacher with the appropriate number of ballots. Color coding the ballots so that each grade level is a different color will help avoid confusion.

Designate trustworthy students to collect completed ballots. No one person should be left alone with them, especially before they have been counted. One school developed a very tight system of distributing ballots to the homerooms, but a representative was caught altering the completed ballots while bringing them to the student council room to be counted.

If you are counting the ballots by hand, institute safeguards to ensure accuracy. The ballots for each

MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICER INSTALLATION

Middle level student council installations can be made more memorable under the following circumstances:

- The student body and faculty are informed of the purpose of the installation and expectations for the audience.
- The ceremony is carefully scripted, practiced, and student-led.
- The ceremony includes symbolism of leadership that is explained to the student body.
- Attention is given to the general aesthetics of the room in the way of lighting, sound, and appropriate decorations.

class should be counted independently by two or more people. Totals should match. Be sure to have a faculty member on hand to supervise the counting process. Once ballots have been counted, they can be locked in the school safe for a period of time, in the event someone wishes to contest the election.

Another aspect of balloting includes using technology to make counting easier. If a computerized test-grading machine (such as a Scantron®) is available, students can vote using computerized ballots, thus greatly reducing the opportunity for and likelihood of ballot tampering. Use of balloting software and online programs allows students to vote from a computer or their own devices. Students visit the polls any time during the day, sign in with their student identification number, and vote. Results are easily tracked in real time and tabulated instantly.

Installation of Officers and Representatives

The installation assembly is significant as the ceremony that celebrates the time when the newly elected officers officially assume their duties from the current council officers.

The principal or the adviser administers an oath of office to the newly elected officeholders. Speeches by the adviser, principal, and student council president are in order. Other school clubs and organizations may wish to have their officers (and possibly members and representatives) take oaths during the same assembly. Or the event can be marked with an awards banquet.

In any case, it is important that the event be a memorable one. There are many ways to pass the torch of leadership from the outgoing to the incoming officers. Find a meaningful ceremony that fulfills your school traditions.

SAMPLE INSTALLATION CEREMONY

1. Students and faculty members enter and are formally welcomed to the ceremony.
2. Members of the current student council are introduced and are seated on stage or in front of the bleachers.
3. The vice president leads the Pledge of Allegiance.
4. The historian gives a brief review of student council activities over the past year.
5. The secretary calls roll to recognize all student council members. They come forward and receive a certificate from the president and principal. The secretary receives the last certificate after being announced by the president.
6. The newly elected officers are introduced. Oaths of office are given, beginning with the lowest office and ending with president. During this part of the ceremony, a flame of leadership (represented by a candle) can be passed for each office from current to newly elected officers.
7. After taking the oath, the new president gives a short address.
8. To symbolize his or her commitment to leading the student council and the school, the new president can have the student council stand, then light the

candles of the other new officers who then spread the “light of leadership” to the other student council members.

9. End with closing remarks by the student council adviser or the principal.
10. After dismissing the student body, follow the ceremony with a photo session and reception of student council members, parents, and available faculty.

See Appendix 3 for a sample installation ceremony. 🔥

CHAPTER 7

Member and Officer Responsibilities

Council members and officers have important duties and responsibilities both to the council and to the rest of the student body. Most councils outline these responsibilities in their constitution and bylaws. Depending upon the size of the council, these duties may vary. Specific responsibilities change as the council grows and changes. The offices and officers listed in this chapter are examples of what schools might consider. Each student council and school should determine how many and what kind of officers will address its needs and goals.

While the number of officers may vary depending on the size of the council and the duties to be performed, there should be no more officers than are needed for the available workload. The president and vice president should be elected by and from the entire student body because they are called upon to represent all the students on many occasions. The other officers may be elected either by the student body or by the student council from among its own members.

A successful council must have competent leadership. The students elected to serve must possess the qualities of character that enable them to command the confidence and respect of those they will lead. They must be able to work effectively with others, respect and place value on the contributions others make, and be open-minded and willing to listen and see many points of view. These leaders must possess integrity and the courage to uphold what is right in spite of circumstances.

Conduct Guidelines for Student Leaders

Student council leaders are public officials. If they are to lead effectively and hold the confidence of those they serve, their conduct must conform to an ethical code. The code should be idealistic but at the same time practical, making it possible for any responsible student leader to follow. An ethics code acts as a guidepost for the student leader and a measuring stick for the student body. It may carry no penalties for violation other than accountability to the student body and to the student leader's own conscience. Each school should develop its own code of conduct. Respect, responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, caring, and citizenship are the basics of all the principles below.

SAMPLE PRINCIPLES TO USE IN DEVELOPING A CODE OF CONDUCT

- Upholds fundamentals of morality and ethics
- Complies with school regulations concerning property, programs, etc.
- Demonstrates honesty and reliability
- Shows courtesy, concern, and respect for others
- Takes criticism willingly and accepts recommendations graciously
- Exemplifies desirable qualities of behavior such as positive attitude, poise, stability, etc.

SAMPLE SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF A CONDUCT CODE

- Providing they are not given with the intent of influencing the leader's performance of official duties, a student leader may, within reason, receive personal gifts or favors from others and need not disclose their existence or value to the student body. It is proper for a student leader to accept a leadership-connected reward (such as a free trip to a conference) when it is offered, if to do so reasonably forms a part of the role of informing and representing the student body. The student leader may accept free samples of a product of insubstantial value when they are offered as a form of advertising but not when offered as an inducement to the leader to recommend the product to the student body.
- Whenever a student leader disagrees with the student body on a particular issue, it is up to the leader to choose to put personal preferences aside and follow the students' wishes. But it is also the leader's responsibility to make sure the student body is as informed as possible to make sound judgments.
- A student council may privately vote on minor decisions affecting the student body. However, meetings involving major issues should include the student body whenever time and circumstances permit. The student body should have advance notice of those meetings, along with an agenda.
- A student council has the right to disqualify any of its members, but only for offending written standards developed by the council and approved by the student body. No student council member may be disqualified without the due process of first being accorded a fair, public defense against all charges.
- A student leader's first allegiance is to the student body, but the leader is elected to serve the entire school community as well. This includes students, teachers, administrators, parents, alumni, and future students of the school.
- Qualifications for seeking student office—such as prior leadership experience, GPA, and grade level—should be set solely by the student council and abolished if the designated majority of the students do not approve.

- If the student body wishes to have a particular issue challenged, a student leader who feels that a school rule or issue is unfair or unnecessary should challenge that rule or issue on behalf of the student body.
- A student leader must balance personal and official time commitments in a fair and responsible manner and be prepared to make personal sacrifices when necessary.

President

A student council president is like the captain of a ship. He or she needs to know how to handle many types of situations, must be mature and organized, must have sound judgment, and must possess the ability to work with many different kinds of people. A captain who does not have these traits may face a rebellion, or even a coup. A student council president who lacks the leadership ability to direct council affairs may face an unmanageable student body or council.

Keeping the delicate balance between leading the student council and encouraging other officers, members, and interested students to take on leadership responsibilities is a challenge. In addition, the practical side of being president requires energy, careful management of time, and a good relationship with the student body, administration, and faculty.

OUTLINE OF A PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Preside over all student council meetings.
- Coordinate the work of the council through the other officers and committees.
- Give assistance, guidance, and praise when appropriate.
- Act as a facilitator of group discussion by summarizing, clarifying, etc.
- Write all necessary correspondence, reports, etc.
- Know basics of meeting procedures to ensure smooth meetings.
- Maintain frequent contact with faculty and administrators.
- Work closely with the student council adviser on all planning.

- Keep the principal informed of student council activities.
- Attend community group meetings, such as PTA, to serve as spokesperson for the student council.
- Speak at local civic organization meetings, when required or invited.
- Call executive committee meetings, as needed, in accordance with the constitution and bylaws.
- Participate in student council-sponsored activities.

In addition to formal responsibilities, the president has a wide range of responsibilities to the officers as individuals and should constantly try to be aware of their needs and deal positively with them. This sometimes delicate task is crucial in maintaining a good working relationship among the officers.

The president's responsibilities extend beyond the students within the student council. An important responsibility of a president is to serve as a spokesperson for the student body at large because representing the students is the primary goal of the entire student council organization.

Vice President

The job of the vice president can be very rewarding, but it also can be quite tedious. The role of the vice president must be defined with the president. A good president is eager to help develop the vice presidential position into a creative and productive one, but sometimes the president must be reminded to do that. The vice president can become the right hand, assisting the president.

OUTLINE OF A VICE PRESIDENT'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work closely with the president.
- Assume the president's duties if necessary.
- Coordinate the work of the committees and chair an important committee.
- Work with the president and treasurer in preparing the budget and calendar.
- Assist the president in preparing meeting agendas.

In some schools, the vice president is the president-elect and will serve one year as vice president before assuming the office of president the next year.

MIDDLE LEVEL SECRETARY

In most middle level student councils, one secretary is responsible for the records and the correspondence of the council. Separating the duties of the secretary into two positions is preferred when the number of council activities and meetings necessitates the need for another secretary or the second secretary position is filled by appointment, allowing the council to involve potential student leaders who might not have been elected or who had shied away from the campaign process.

Vice presidents may also be charged with identifying and reading a motivational leadership quote or message at the beginning of each meeting.

Recording Secretary

The duties of the recording secretary are much more comprehensive than simply taking minutes. Often, the duties of the recording secretary and corresponding secretary are combined into one position, requiring that the officeholder be especially talented. Here, however, the secretarial duties will be considered as two separate but closely related positions.

OUTLINE OF A RECORDING SECRETARY'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Prepare and distribute the agenda for business meetings in the style that the assembly selects.
- Take roll of attendees at meetings, either verbal or written.
- Take minutes of the proceedings of all student council meetings.
- Receive all main motions and amendments proposed during a meeting to be included in the minutes.

- Prepare and distribute the written minutes, with the president’s assistance, in a timely manner. Make certain that the administration and faculty receive copies of the minutes.

- Maintain a file of original agendas and minutes.

The recording secretary may use a recording device or shorthand. Recording minutes by hand does not have to be complicated.

Corresponding Secretary

The corresponding and recording secretaries work closely together, one helping the other if work gets backed up. If the work becomes too heavy, a secretary—with the school’s permission—may consider asking the school’s business department for assistance.

OUTLINE OF CORRESPONDING SECRETARY’S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Prepare all required letters of the president, vice president, and adviser.
- Maintain the files of the student council. Establish a policy, with the recording secretary, concerning the sharing of files.
- Maintain contact names, addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses of people with whom the student council regularly works.
- Send thank-you notes and birthday cards to teachers, administrators, and support staff members.
- Produce a student council directory.
- Alert the organization’s members to important correspondence.

Treasurer

The treasurer keeps accurate records of all financial transactions and periodically reports a summary of the monetary transactions to the executive committee and at business meetings. The treasurer predicts how money will be used in the future and makes concrete suggestions for saving money and increasing efficiency. To do the job correctly, a treasurer must keep track of all expenditures and add the appropriate transactions to the books. The treasurer should be the person concerned with regulating the flow of money, especially when many people want to spend it.

MIDDLE LEVEL TREASURER

At the middle level, the duties of the treasurer should be such that no student is placed in a compromising position related to the handling of financial transactions. While assisting the adviser with preparing monies for delivery to the school finance officer is appropriate, giving the treasurer the responsibility of making deposits or payments constitutes a liability issue for both the student and the adviser.

OUTLINE OF TREASURER’S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Work closely with the president and vice president in preparing a workable yearlong calendar and budget.
- Oversee council expenses and revenues.
- Maintain an accurate and detailed financial record.
- Give monetary advice to the student council. Prepare cost-benefit analyses of various endeavors (i.e., will the expense of time, money, or effort be worthwhile in terms of its benefits of money, improved image, etc.?).
- Understand the policies the school has in regard to the use of student finances and explain them when necessary.
- Receive payment vouchers, review purchase orders, and review pending invoices with the adviser and bookkeeper.
- Follow school and district policies regarding students handling of money.
- Make and interpret monthly financial reports to membership at the business meeting.
- Check that the appropriate school officials have signed all contracts.
- Work closely with the school bookkeeper.

Historian

The historian is charged with developing a pictorial and written record of the highlights of the year. This job can't be done in a few nights; it must be a yearlong effort. This position can be incorporated into an officer's duties, or it can be held by a person whose sole responsibility is this assignment.

OUTLINE OF A HISTORIAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Record the activities of the year through videos, photos, written reports, and other materials.
- Prepare a historical document such as a scrapbook, website, slide show, video, or other digital records.

Parliamentarian

The parliamentarian's role varies somewhat, depending on whether he or she is already a voting member of the council or is appointed from outside the council membership. If already a voting member of the council, the parliamentarian has full rights to debate and is a consultant to the president about parliamentary procedure. Voting parliamentarians can even challenge the president's ruling by appealing, as can any other member.

OUTLINE OF A PARLIAMENTARIAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Offer procedural opinions only when asked to do so by the chairperson; is subject to the limitations of debate and voting that are applied to all nonmember speakers.
- Usually chairs the constitution/bylaws revision committee, if the need arises.

Representatives and Committee Members

The representatives embody the council's efforts to be the student voice—the roots of the council. Indeed, it is from their obligation to represent the students that the representatives get their name. These are the people who must develop that crucial dialogue between students and the student council. And they are the ones who ultimately determine much of the direction the council takes during the year.

MIDDLE LEVEL REPRESENTATIVES

The representative body of middle level student councils may be selected and modeled in a number of ways. While some may use a more traditional election process to select homeroom representatives, other middle level schools hold open meetings that any interested student may attend and represent his or her classmates. Another representative form that has gained popularity in middle level schools is a town council or town meeting structure, where several representatives selected from each team serve on an executive council. No matter which form of representative body is adopted, the basic responsibilities of the membership remain intact.

OUTLINE OF REPRESENTATIVES' RESPONSIBILITIES

- Regularly report council actions to the constituent group in an accurate, informative, and interesting way.
- Present to the council, as fairly as possible, students' ideas and motions, if the students don't do so directly themselves.
- When voting on issues, maintain a consciousness of what is best for the students rather than "what is best for me."
- Make special efforts to inform the student body of upcoming events that might interest them.
- Take informal polls on how students feel about certain topics.
- Welcome new students to the classroom.
- Encourage nonmembers of student council to work on committees.

As with many other offices, the responsibilities of

representatives cannot be described completely in a list. To do the job well, representatives must add creativity, enthusiasm, and devotion to any list of their duties.

Committee Chairs

These members must be excellent at organizing people to implement projects. They also must make sure that the feelings of the committee members are respected and dealt with in positive, beneficial ways. These students represent the committee members on the executive committee.

OUTLINE OF COMMITTEE CHAIR RESPONSIBILITIES

- Help members express their ideas in committee meetings.
- Keep the group focused on one idea at a time.
- Help resolve disagreements among committee members.
- Research information for the committee.
- Work with committee members in assigning individual responsibility for certain aspects of a project.
- Constantly monitor progress toward meeting deadlines and ensure that committee members know the deadlines.
- Work with the vice president to prepare monthly committee reports.
- Give input to the executive committee, especially about the attitudes and ideas of their committee members.
- Work with the treasurer to design ways the committee can cut costs.
- Check with the constitution/bylaws committee and the executive committee concerning the committee's authority.

Other Elected or Appointed Offices

PUBLIC RELATIONS SPECIALIST

Some councils are involved in so many activities that they need one person to maintain a continual flow of information to local papers, television and radio stations, and other schools in addition to the student body. The public relations specialist and the

corresponding secretary should determine who is responsible for preparing and sending the information.

Outline of a Public Relations Specialist's Responsibilities

- Consult with the principal about the appropriate protocol for releasing information to the news media.
- Release information periodically to the news media about council activities, based on school or district protocols learned through the principal.
- Check releases for proper spelling and grammar.
- Work with the adviser on all materials being sent to organizations outside the school.
- Compile lists of addresses of the news media and their requirements for announcing school events.
- Keep the student body informed of events through bulletins, posters, announcements, websites, flyers, etc.

SCRAPBOOK ASSISTANT

Student councils will often appoint one or two additional students to assist the historian or take the lead on creating and maintaining an annual scrapbook in either print or electronic form.

COMMISSIONER OF RALLIES AND ASSEMBLIES

This officer's role is to organize and involve students in pep rallies and assemblies; brainstorm and incorporate other students' ideas for rallies and assemblies; and act as the master of ceremonies for rallies and assemblies or choose another student, teacher, or administrator to do so.

COMMISSIONER OF CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

This officer organizes all interclub activities; provides an up-to-date list of all clubs and organizations on campus along with their constitutions and member rosters; and organizes a club/organization sign-up day at the beginning of the school year. The student council president serves as chair of an interclub council, if one exists.

COMMISSIONER OF ELECTIONS

This officer works with the adviser and the administration during the election of student body and class officers.

Adviser

The adviser provides a wealth of sound advice and practical knowledge and may well be the single most important factor in the success of a student council. The adviser should use every opportunity available to become better trained in the field of student activities and student leadership development.

OUTLINE OF AN ADVISER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

- Provide guidance and direction for effective student council operation.
- Know the school system and how students work within the system.
- Promote participation in cocurricular activities as vital to student success.
- Keep faculty members and administrators informed on the significant developments of the student council.
- Work with local business and community organizations.
- Oversee—rather than direct—council operations (direct operations only if necessary).
- Maintain an appropriate space for council files and materials.
- Understand activities operation, including legal responsibilities.
- Keep records of the previous year's student council for use by the following year's officers.

For more information on officers' responsibilities, you can view officer profiles in the Adviser Resource Center at www.NatStuCo.org. 🔥

MIDDLE LEVEL APPOINTED MEMBERS

Although some appointments to committees and other positions might be made from within a student council, filling ex officio and other positions from the student body at large can also yield a number of benefits, the foremost being the image of the student council as an open and responsive leadership organization. A second benefit of at-large appointments is the increased number of students who become directly engaged with the council and its activities. This is especially important at the middle level, where student councils historically maintain smaller numbers in their memberships, and middle school is a melting pot for students who previously attended different elementary schools.

Meeting Management

A student council must have well-planned meetings to be effective and to accomplish its goals and objectives. It is in meetings that attitudes are created and developed as the members formulate policies, make decisions, and discuss ideas.

Planning a Meeting

Every meeting, whether it is of the whole council or a committee, should have a well-thought-out plan that will help ensure that goals are reached. Although meetings take many forms and serve many purposes, they all share some common elements. Take the following steps to ensure that members leave your meetings feeling their time was well spent.

- **Define the purpose of the meeting.** Sometimes the purpose is clearly stated; sometimes it's taken for granted. Do you want people to experience something? Learn something? Make decisions? Plan an activity? Consider various activities that will help accomplish your purpose, and structure your meeting to accomplish that purpose. If there is no real purpose, don't hold a meeting!
- **Plan an agenda.** Once you have an objective, outline the items to be handled during the meeting. List them in the order in which they are to be addressed, and indicate how much time will be spent on each item. Also consider what method will be used for each item, such as brainstorming, buzz groups, cause-and-effect diagram, etc. This is your agenda.
- **Consider your time limit.** Meeting lengths vary greatly. How much can be dealt with in the time available? Plan your agenda so everything can be handled within the time allotted.
- **Plan for the people who will be involved.** Consider who will be present at the meeting. Are they familiar with the business at hand? If not, how can you bring them up to speed? How motivated will they be to participate? Who will be leading the activities? Answering these questions will help determine the activities of the meeting.
- **Schedule the meeting in an appropriate setting.** Plan an atmosphere that will be conducive to participation and productivity. Consider such things as size of room, arrangement of seating, lighting, acoustics, temperature, and equipment needed. For example, if your objective is to get small groups of people together to discuss an issue and come up with potential solutions, don't hold the meeting in the auditorium, where small-group discussions are awkward, at best. Instead, hold the meeting in the library or cafeteria, where small groups can gather around a table.
- **Follow your plan.** During the meeting, work through the agenda items one at a time, being careful to stick to time limits and avoid getting off track. Be flexible enough to adjust your plan if truly needed, but don't allow one item to take over the meeting unless it's warranted.
- **Review decisions made.** All agreements made during the meeting should be reviewed and verified at the end of the meeting, such as tasks assigned, chairs appointed, committees formed, etc. Plan steps that need to be taken before the next meeting in order to advance projects undertaken.
- **Evaluate the meeting.** Take a few minutes at the end of the meeting to evaluate how successful the

meeting was. What went well? What could be improved upon for the next meeting? Focusing on the process will help all members have a better understanding of what a good meeting should be like and will help ensure that each meeting becomes more effective than the last.

Business Meetings

Those people who are not familiar with student council may believe that most student council work is done in business meetings because there seems to be so many of them. But the truth is, the largest share of the work is done by committees and by the officers. Business meetings are not the place to develop creative ideas or to work out compromises. These jobs should be handled in committees. Nonetheless, business meetings are important and productive.

Business meetings are held for several reasons: to communicate with, motivate, and educate council members; to decide on an official stand by using a formal voting procedure; and/or to have a limited amount of discussion on an issue or proposed course of action.

The procedures for running a successful business meeting are usually referred to as “parliamentary procedure” because their historical origins are in rules developed for the British Parliament. To see the procedures used in U.S. terms, watch a congressional session on C-SPAN. A thorough understanding of the rules can be a great help to councils, but applying them haphazardly or only occasionally can result in unsuccessful meetings.

Principles of Parliamentary Logic

Parliamentary logic is simple: Be courteous and use common sense. This logic is the foundation of the principles on which all parliamentary procedures are based. Although it is simple, parliamentary logic is perhaps the most important key to the “mysteries” of parliamentary meeting procedures.

The wording and phrases used in parliamentary procedure are more difficult than the parliamentary logic. Some people react negatively to formal parliamentary language, saying that it is unnecessary and cumbersome. No doubt, it does seem to get in

the way at times. However, present-day parliamentary procedure is designed to be used in thousands of different kinds of business meetings. By insisting on a precise and definite wording, parliamentary procedure enables any person who knows its rules to function effectively in a variety of meetings. The emphasis on the precise wording, therefore, is simply an effort to develop standardization in business meeting procedures.

Main Considerations of Parliamentary Logic

When using parliamentary procedure to conduct meetings, a student council should do the following:

- Consider only one idea at a time.
- Encourage individuals to introduce ideas, but decide on those ideas only as a group.
- Decide how to spend its own time in meetings.
- Be ruled by the majority but also protect the minority.
- Realize that the group cannot violate some individual rights for any reason.
- Refuse to take a stand if it might be harmful later.
- Exercise the option to change its mind, when necessary.

For council members who do not have training in parliamentary usage, the wording can be confusing. Precise wording provides the most complete citizenship training, but it is not a requirement of a good student council. What is required of a good council is that it strictly follow the logic behind parliamentary procedure, even if it does not precisely follow the language.

Motions

The heart of parliamentary procedure is the motion. A motion is a proposal by a member of the group that the group take certain action. There are five types of motions:

- **Main motions** are major proposals or suggestions for action to be taken by the group. Main motions are the only way to bring business before the group. Any member may make a main motion after securing the floor and being recognized by

the chair. A second is needed. The motion is debatable, can be amended, and needs a majority to carry. A motion is out of order if other business is on the floor. Example:

- *Member:* The member rises, remains standing, waits for recognition, and addresses the chair: “Mr. President” or “Madam Chair.”
- *Chair:* Recognize member: “The chair recognizes (member’s name, if known).” After receiving recognition, the member is said to “have the floor.”
- *Member:* State a motion: “I move that...” or “I move the adoption of the following resolution....”
- *Another member:* “I second the motion.” Seconding member need not address the chair, be recognized, or rise. If there is no second, the motion dies. There can be no discussion and no vote.
- *Chair:* State the motion and ask for discussion: “It is moved and seconded that.... Is there any discussion?” Members wishing to speak for or against the motion must rise, address the chair, and be recognized. Members generally speak only once and limit their remarks to pertinent comments. No other motion may be made until the motion on the floor has been disposed of—either passed, rejected, or tabled (removed indefinitely from consideration). When there seems to be a lull in the discussion, the chair may ask, “Are you ready for the question?” or “Is there any further discussion?” If no one objects, the chair puts the motion to vote.
- *Chair:* The chair again repeats the motion: “It has been moved and seconded that.... All in favor of the motion say ‘aye.’ All those opposed say ‘nay.’” The chair then announces the results: “The motion is carried,” or “The motion is lost.” If the chair is not sure of the vote, he or she may ask for a show of hands or a standing vote. On some important matters there may be a need for a roll call vote. This is also the time to call for a “division of the house.”

- **Subsidiary motions** in some way alter or change the disposition of the main motion. Subsidiary motions are always acted upon before the main motion. Such motions include motions to postpone a matter, amend a motion, refer to committee, limit or extend debate, or lay a motion on the table.
- **Privileged motions** have no connection to the main motion but are of such importance or urgency that they are entitled to immediate consideration. Privileged motions outrank all other motions. Such motions include questions of privilege, orders of the day, or motions to recess or adjourn.
- **Incidental motions** concern matters of procedure arising out of business and must be settled at once. A group member will make an incidental motion when he or she feels a mistake has been made or a point must be clarified in the observance of either parliamentary procedure or the organization’s rules. Examples include points of order, to appeal the decision of the chair, to suspend the rules, to call for a division of the house, to make a point of inquiry or information, and to ask for permission to withdraw the motion.
- **Unclassified motions** are those that do not fall into any of the above categories. They cannot be made if any other motion is under consideration and must be appropriate for that part of the meeting (unfinished business, new business, etc.). Examples include motions to take from the table or to reconsider a motion.

Common Parliamentary Procedure Terms

Below are the main terms used in parliamentary procedure. By learning these basics, along with their meanings and usage, student leaders can run more successful meetings.

Adjourn: To close the meeting (this may not interrupt a vote).

Amend: A proposal for a change or modification in a main motion currently under consideration.

Appeal decision of chair: To appeal to the assembly to override a ruling made by the chair.

Committee of the whole: To consider a motion

informally (using group discussion methods) instead of sending it to a committee.

Division of the house: To call for an announcement of the number of people voting for and against a motion (usually called for after a voice vote if the vote was close).

Fix time of next meeting: To fix time for reassembling.

Lay on table: To postpone consideration of a question (motion) temporarily (may be brought up in the same session or some later session).

Limit debate: To restrict the time available for debate on a motion.

Main motion for general business: A proposal for action concerning the general business of the group.

Make a special order of business: To set a specific time for the exclusive consideration of a particular question.

Object to consideration: To object to the consideration of a motion considered irrelevant or objectionable (must be made before debate begins).

Orders of the day: A request to conform to the order of business.

Parliamentary inquiry: To seek advice from the chair concerning parliamentary procedure.

Postpone indefinitely: To dispose of a motion without voting upon it.

Postpone to a certain time: To delay any action until a specified time because of a pending question.

Previous question: To terminate discussion on a debatable motion by bringing it to immediate vote.

Question of order: To correct an error in parliamentary procedure.

Question of privilege: A request for the chair to deal with an emergency situation (disorders, offensive remarks, discomfort, etc.).

Recess: To temporarily disband for a specific purpose (vote, lunch, etc.).

Reconsider: To give the group an opportunity to consider again an action already taken (special rules apply here).

Refer to committee: To delay an opportunity to consider again an action already taken (special rules apply here).

Request for information: To request information concerning the pending business.

Rescind: To cancel an action taken at a previous meeting.

Take from table or resume consideration: To revive a motion previously laid on the table or temporarily put aside.

Withdraw a motion: To prevent action on a motion when the maker of the motion has changed his or her mind (to be made only by maker of the motion).

Responsibilities of the Chair

In a business meeting, the chair (usually the president) is responsible for keeping the meeting orderly, understandable, and democratic. This requires not only a good knowledge of parliamentary meeting procedures but also practical skill in conducting meetings.

The following suggestions will help the chair be a more effective meeting leader:

- Realize that each chairperson has his or her own style. Some are very formal and go “by the book”; others conduct meetings in a relaxed manner. Both styles can work. It depends upon the nature of the chairperson, the particular issues, and the mood of the meeting. Each chairperson should realize the strength of his or her style and work to develop it.
- Protect individual rights.
- Call motions or actions that are out of order, not a person. For example, “The motion is out of order because...” not “You are out of order because....”
- When ruling a motion or action out of order, try to offer a suggestion to help the person accomplish the proposal.
- Rule a motion “out of order” if it clearly attempts to hinder the assembly’s ability to discuss business.
- Require that all main motions and complicated amendments immediately be given in writing to the recording secretary. This will save much confusion later.
- Always state clearly what is before the assembly for consideration.
- If the meeting is noisy, never try to shout over it. The confusion will just increase.
- Use a gavel—tap one time to quiet the group.
- Explain what is happening to those who are lost in the discussion.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES IN ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

	Second Needed	Amendable	Debatable	Vote Required	Interrupt Speaker
Fix time of next meeting	yes	yes	no	1/2	no
Adjourn	yes	no	no	1/2	no
Recess	yes	yes	no	1/2	no
Question of privilege	no	no	no	chair	yes
Lay on the table	yes	no	no	1/2	no
Previous question	yes	no	no	2/3	no
Limit debate	yes	yes	no	2/3	no
Postpone to a certain time	yes	yes	yes	1/2	no
Refer to a committee	yes	yes	yes	1/2	no
Committee of the whole	yes	yes	yes	1/2	no
Amend	yes	yes	*	1/2	no
Postpone	yes	no	yes	1/2	no

*Debatable when motion to which it applies is debatable.

Chair: The chairperson can make the decision, but it is a majority vote if appealed.

PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURES IN NO ORDER OF PRECEDENCE

	Second Needed	Amendable	Debatable	Vote Required	Interrupt Speaker
Main motion	yes	yes	yes	1/2	no
Take from table	yes	no	no	1/2	no
Reconsider	yes	no	*	1/2	yes
Rescind	yes	yes	yes	2/3	no
Make special order of business	yes	yes	yes	2/3	no
Appeal from decision of chair	yes	no	*	1/2	yes
Suspend the rules	yes	no	no	2/3	no
Object to consider	no	no	no	chair	yes
Parliamentary inquiry	no	no	no	chair	yes
Withdraw a motion	no	no	no	1/2	no
Division	no	no	no	1/2	yes
Point of order	no	no	no	chair	yes
Request for information	no	no	no	1/2	no

*Debatable when motion to which it applies is debatable.

Chair: The chairperson can make the decision, but it is a majority vote if appealed.

- Refrain from debate with individuals.
- Take all two-thirds votes by counting raised hands, not by voice.
- Follow a precise format when voting:
 1. Announce that debate has ended.
 2. Reread the exact motion so that everyone understands.
 3. Say, “All those in favor of the motion, please say ‘aye’ (or yes) or abstain.” Pause. Then, “Those opposed, please say nay (or no) or abstain.”
 4. State which side of the vote was successful, and by what margin. (Example: “The nays have it by at least a majority vote.”)
 5. State whether the motion was passed or defeated.
 6. Inform the assembly what motion (if any)

WHY TEACH PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE?

If parliamentary procedure can be confusing and cumbersome, why should it be taught?

- Parliamentary procedure teaches respect for the democratic decision-making process. Groups too often wait until a crisis arises to address the problems inherent in their decision-making processes. The appropriate time to teach parliamentary procedure is before a crisis occurs. Parliamentary procedure provides a sound basis for democratic decision-making that precludes the necessity of floundering from one crisis to the next.
- Parliamentary procedure expedites business. Meetings conducted according to parliamentary procedure move more quickly and get the required business done in less time. Because of this, many businesses (where “time is money”) have begun to utilize the principles of parliamentary procedure in their meetings.

- Meetings that utilize parliamentary procedure are more focused and orderly. Parliamentary procedure allows only one item of business to be considered at any given time. All lines of communication are directed to and from the chair. There is less confusion and a greater sense of order and accomplishment because members are able to follow the progress of the meeting.
- Parliamentary procedure protects the rights of both the majority and the minority. The majority has the right to prevail on any given issue and the right to reasonable expediency in arriving at a decision. The minority has the right to be heard and the right to attempt to persuade others to accept its viewpoint (thus converting a temporary minority into a majority). Parliamentary procedure provides the tools for protecting both majority

and minority rights so that no faction is allowed to arbitrarily impose its will on any other group.

- Parliamentary procedure provides a common language for democratic decision-making. To be effective in meetings, members must learn to speak the language of parliamentary procedure. Like any other language, this requires constant practice. Once mastered, the language of parliamentary procedure enables participants to meet on common ground and to deliberate in terms that are universally accepted as a basis for sound decision-making.
- The net result of using parliamentary procedure is a better informed citizenry capable of participating in the daily decision-making that forms the basis of our democracy.

comes next. (Example: “Is there any more new business?”)

- Call on people of differing opinions throughout debate. Members wishing to talk should raise their hand and wait to be recognized by the chairperson.
- Call on a person a second time for debate only after everyone who wishes has spoken a first time.
- Use a microphone, if necessary, for a large meeting.
- Arrange a signal with a council member in the meeting who can be “cued” to move to end debate if discussion starts going in circles.
- Follow an agenda.
- Keep a readable chart on parliamentary procedure handy for quick reference.
- Before the first official council meeting, hold a workshop on how parliamentary procedure works and ask a local parliamentarian to present it. Officers and members should have a copy of the common parliamentary terms.

Do Student Councils Need Parliamentary Procedure?

Parliamentary procedure is an effective decision-making method for people who understand it, but is complicated and bothersome for those who don’t.

Some councils are small and friendly enough that they do not need the formal wording and rules of parliamentary procedure. However, all councils need respect for those common-sense and common-courtesy principles upon which parliamentary procedure is based. Although it is possible to follow those general principles without using a complicated system of rules and motions, councils neglect a very valuable area of formal citizenship training by neglecting parliamentary procedure. In a heated controversy, it may be an effective tool for cooling tempers.

Alternatives to Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is not the only way to conduct a meeting, nor is it always the best way. Councils and other groups that choose not to follow the strict form of parliamentary procedure use some form of interactive discussion. Interactive discussion in small

groups involves direct, easy interchange; members speak up without waiting for recognition by the leader, and each communicator must be aware of every other person and their reactions.

The situation is more difficult when 40 people are interacting, rather than five. Being aware of every other member in a large group is difficult; each communicator tends to consider his or her listener a mass of “others”—an audience. The speaker is less likely to feel that he or she is talking directly to a few individuals. Yet this kind of direct interaction is desirable in many group situations.

Interactive discussions have many variations. Consider some of the following options.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

A roundtable discussion is a closed, informal discussion typically held around a table or circle. It is used by groups that are trying to achieve a specific goal or solve a problem. Members meet, with or without a chairperson, and start talking. Their discussion may be structured, with an introduction and a conclusion, or hit-or-miss. There are no auditors or observers.

INTERACTION METHOD

This system uses a facilitator and recorder to post the group agenda, give ground rules, and help with interaction and participation. The facilitator keeps the group focused and on track. The recorder writes down ideas on butcher paper or chart paper so people can clearly see their recorded words. This method is effective because it fosters participation of all members of the group and builds consensus by shared ownership of plans.

PANEL DISCUSSION

A panel of three to eight participants is selected to discuss a topic in front of, and partially for the benefit of, an audience. This method is a type of structured conversation. Usually, though not necessarily, there is a designated moderator. The audience may be allowed to ask questions or enter into the discussion while it is underway or after the panel has finished.

SYMPOSIUM

A number of people, often experts in some aspect of the subject under consideration, are each invited to make short speeches. When all have spoken, participants may ask questions or make statements in regard to what another has said, and the audience may be invited to join in.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

After a general presentation (or even prior to a program), a large group is divided into small units. Each of these “buzz” groups is asked to consider a specific question. All the small groups may be answering the same question or each may have a different question. Each group selects a leader and/or recorder. At the end of the allotted period, each leader or recorder presents his or her group’s report to the whole assembly. In this way, every individual takes an active role in deliberation, even though contributions are filtered through the reporter. Member satisfaction is increased by this process, and there is usually a noticeable increase in interaction within the large meeting following a discussion session. The success of the method depends largely on the quality of questions assigned to each small unit. The time allowed for the discussion questions should be as short as possible to create a sense of urgency and importance.

COOPERATIVE INVESTIGATIONS

The procedure for this type of group is more formal, as its purpose is more sharply focused. It is designed for situations in which group members have little information on the topic and no expert is available to provide information about what they need to know. There are usually eight steps to this “do it yourself” exercise.

1. The group meets in advance to elect a leader and to divide the subject into a number of subtopics.
2. So members can know what each has accomplished, the leader calls one or more advance meetings to review assignments and make final plans.
3. At the beginning of the meeting, the leader analyzes and defines the problem.
4. Each member then presents his or her information

in a brief report. The report contains only information, no argument.

5. When the reports are finished, the leader calls for any additional information.
6. The leader concludes the first portion of the meeting by summarizing the fresh pool of information and opens the second half by inviting discussion in light of the facts presented.
7. Finally, if the nature of the problem permits, ways and means for putting an agreed-upon solution into operation are discussed.
8. At the conclusion of the discussion, the leader summarizes the points of agreement, identifies any problems that still need attention, and evaluates the process by which the group reached its understanding.

BRAINSTORMING

The unique purpose of brainstorming is to encourage the creation and expression of original ideas to solve a difficult problem. Because the emphasis is on creative quantity and not quality, the ideas are not evaluated or discussed during the brainstorming session. By taking the pressure of judgment off the group, it is hoped that imaginations will be stirred to move outside well-worn pathways and look for previously unimagined possibilities.

The following ground rules should be tightly enforced in brainstorming:

- Think positively. Realize that a solution to the problem does exist and that the task is to find it.
- Write down every idea. Quantity is essential to the success of the system and every person should be encouraged to offer as many ideas as come to mind.
- Encourage ideas that are inspired by and expanded from those already offered by someone else.
- Do not permit criticism or evaluation of ideas. The wilder the ideas, the better the results.

After the brainstorming process is finished, the evaluation begins and continues until the merits of each alternative are discussed and a solution to the problem is achieved.

HOUSE RULES

Using house rules is an informal way to structure a

meeting. House rules are usually 5–20 rules of courtesy and procedure that are determined by the group for its own use. This method provides a simple, flexible framework for groups whose members want an alternative to strict parliamentary procedure.

House rules usually cover the following areas:

- How will the group reach decisions? Who makes them?
- How will ideas be presented? When? How many?
- How will ideas be changed?
- How will information be obtained?

LECTURE/PRESENTATION

The main purpose of lectures and presentations is to share information. Information is provided by qualified speakers well versed in the lecture topic. The speakers give their prepared remarks to the audience with little interaction from the rest of the group. After the lecture, an open forum on the topic is usually provided.

OPEN FORUM

An open forum provides the chance for each group member to express an opinion on a topic. The right to speak is available to all members of the group; prepared or impromptu comments may be freely expressed. This information-sharing method lends itself to discussion of material from a movie, speech, or presentation. Order must be maintained and members are recognized by the leader to ensure that the forum process continues.

PROBLEM-SOLVING MODEL

Sometimes it is important to get wide popular support for an idea or project. For instance, a community service project probably won't be successful unless it has the backing of the entire membership. To ensure that members' ideas are heard and that commitments are made by the members who want to participate, councils can start by having members discuss the possibilities for projects or solutions in small groups where people can speak freely and frequently. One method for dividing a large group into small groups for discussion is as follows:

1. Present the problem to the entire group. Make sure

everyone understands the problem and that the wording is clear.

2. Divide into several small groups. Instruct each group to come up with three possible solutions, ideas, or projects.
3. Have each small group select a spokesperson to present and explain the group's ideas. Seat all the spokespersons in a circle, with the other representatives surrounding them in a large circle.
4. Each spokesperson selects one or two ideas, solutions, or projects that were brought up in the small groups for discussion. The outer circle of representatives should remain silent. No one in the inner circle should ask questions of those on the outside.
5. After 10 minutes of discussion, spokespersons return to their small groups. Representatives tell them about any important points they missed, how they felt about the other groups' ideas, and anything else that may contribute to a decision.
6. Spokespeople then return to the circle to work out a final decision, keeping in mind the opinions of their groups.

INFORMATIONAL CONFERENCES

A true informational conference is a specifically scheduled meeting, without an audience, at which all participants share their personal knowledge or experience with the others present. The goal is the sharing of knowledge that may make the group and the individuals more efficient in their work.

The informational conference differs from the problem-solving conference in that its goal is to produce information only, not to isolate, examine, and solve a problem. It may, however, enlarge group knowledge about a problem as a result of sharing information.

RESOURCES

A number of books and pamphlets on meeting procedures are available to student councils. One that specifically addresses the topic in this chapter is *Parliamentary Procedure Without Stress*. Visit www.NatStuCo.org/store for this booklet and more, or order from the NatStuCo Catalog. 🔥

CHAPTER 9

Financial Procedures

Opportunities for students to handle activity funds are outstanding educational experiences. Even though some people believe that students cannot assume this responsibility, an increasing number of schools are using student-operated financial systems, with the school principal or adviser overseeing the process. Students can gain valuable experience by learning banking policies and procedures, preparing budgets, bookkeeping, earning and disbursing money, and auditing accounts. It seems impossible for the student council to become a significant influence in the life of the school if it does not have financial responsibility. Certainly if the student council is to serve as the center of the student activity program, it should have some control over those funds.

Establishing a Budget

Organizations that handle money should never try to operate without a budget. A budget is a financial plan of action that can be prepared monthly or yearly. It is used as a working document to keep finances in check. Think of it as the business plan for your student council. The process of determining the council's budget should rest with a budget or finance committee guided by the treasurer and the adviser. (See Appendix 2 for a sample budget form.) The committee may include other officers or it may be a special committee of appointed members. This group should look at the expenses of the previous year and project what the expenses might be in each area for the upcoming year. Look for areas that can be cut, list priorities, and determine the amount of money needed for each activity.

Be sure to allow for increased costs, include extra

money for unexpected items or projects, and estimate projected revenue. In many schools, the finance/budget committee is also responsible for determining how the organization will acquire the funds necessary to operate. Before determining fundraising projects, review school policies and guidelines and review the school master calendar.

In establishing the budget, keep in mind your organization's stated purpose. (Check the constitution for "Statement of Purpose.") Your budget for activities and projects should reflect that statement. Likewise, your expenditures should help you achieve your stated goals. For example, if social activities are not one of your stated purposes or goals, then an expenditure for a pizza party would not be appropriate.

Neither large surpluses nor deficits should be allowed when budgeting. Proper budgeting requires adherence to definite, well-understood business procedures. A well-thought-out budget prevents popular activities from draining the available financial resources of a council at the expense of other activities.

The finance committee should prepare the proposed budget and present its recommendations to the executive committee for approval. In some organizations, the general membership must approve each specific appropriation or expenditure; in others, the treasurer must make sure the group adheres to the budget. The student council adviser and school principal should approve the final annual operating budget.

Once the overall budget for the year is established, individual committee chairs should work with the treasurer to develop anticipated revenue and expenses for each project. Blank reports can be given to each

committee chairperson to complete and return to the treasurer. The individual project anticipated budget and activity expense should contain:

- Name and date of activity
- Revenues (with a separate line for each item)
- Total projected revenue (add all sources of projected revenue)
- Expenses (with a separate line for each item)
- Total projected expenses (add all projected expenses)
- Activity projected profit or loss

After the event or project, an activity expense report should be filed with the same information as above, using actual figures for expenses and revenue rather than projected amounts.

As the year proceeds, it is also helpful for the treasurer to prepare a projected monthly budget. This projected budget for the upcoming month can give an overview of the entire student council budget. It should contain:

- Date
- Revenues with each activity item listed
- Total revenues
- Expenses with each activity item listed
- Total expenses
- Total projected profit/loss

Keeping Good Records

Local policies, state laws and regulations, and expectations of the state auditor's office control record keeping for student activity funds.

Check with your district's financial office to determine what specific policies are applicable in your school. In general, it's a good idea to maintain an accurate and detailed financial record of all transactions, money received, and money spent.

Maintaining an accurate and detailed financial record requires some sort of bookkeeping ledger, either a traditional ledger—available at any office supply store—or a digital spreadsheet (Excel) that will allow you to track finances. You can set up your own system using a spreadsheet program or purchase a program that is specifically designed for financial matters. The ledger should contain accurate records of all

transactions, money received, and money spent.

A numbered receipt book is essential for recording all money the council receives. These receipts should be in triplicate with the original going to the person paying the money, a copy to the school bookkeeper, and a copy remaining in the council files. This receipt book should be accurately maintained as proof of money collected in case of an audit or other unforeseen reasons. The school bookkeeper must maintain an inventory of receipt books. The adviser should deposit all money in the school office on the day it is received. Never allow cash to accumulate in students' lockers or classrooms. Disbursement of funds should be handled in accordance with school and district policy.

Accounting Principles

In most cases, the actual paperwork and bookkeeping involved in managing student council funds are the duties of the treasurer in conjunction with the adviser. Where large amounts of money are involved or in large schools, many times a financial committee is one of the standing committees, with the treasurer serving as the chairperson. The treasurer and/or financial committee must have a sound accounting system.

Certain principles are involved in planning for efficient control of funds that must be considered by every school and every student council. The following principles should be used as standards to evaluate current accounting systems as well as a checklist for planning a new one.

- Each person responsible for receiving the money and for issuing general receipts and checks should be bonded to the largest anticipated amount of money on hand at any time during the year. This may be the school bookkeeper, principal, or adviser.
- All receipts should be issued from duplicate or triplicate receipt books with originals and copies serially numbered and accounted for.
- All disbursements should be by school or district check with a supporting voucher. At least two signatures—those of the principal and the adviser—should be required.
- A computer accounting system that shows the general summary of the funds, the distribution of

assets in the bank and other places, and individual activity accounts may present page-by-page balances. If a computer system is not available, a single columnar book, bound or loose-leaf, is recommended for keeping accounts.

- Summary statements of all accounts should be prepared as of the close of each calendar month (or other similar period) including bank reconciliation. Copies of such statements should be placed on file in the principal's office.
- A licensed accountant, under the direction of the school board, should audit all activity accounts at regular periods—in conjunction with school finance audits.
- The best accounting procedure implies operation of each separate account under a planned budget as much as possible. Procedures for handling student council finances should conform to the above. Many schools now use a rather complicated procedure to authorize disbursements. Frequently, the student council first authorizes disbursements with the adviser's approval, with final approval given by the principal.

Disbursements from student council funds are usually made by the student council treasurer through a written order that has been approved by the adviser and/or principal and then given to the school's central treasurer, who issues a check. The accounts of all student organizations are maintained by the school treasurer, and student treasurers of each organization must reconcile their accounts with those of the central treasurer.

Bookkeeping

The treasurer is usually responsible for keeping the account of the student council. If a financial committee is used, one of the members may be the actual bookkeeper while the treasurer oversees or coordinates the bookkeeping. The selection of a competent treasurer is very important to an effective student council. The books should be kept neat, accurate, simple, complete, and up to date.

Money should never be taken home but should be deposited in the bank immediately. No bills should be

paid from cash on hand. Bills should be paid promptly and accounts cleared in full as soon as possible. The books should be posted as frequently as business is transacted. Many mistakes and discrepancies in bookkeeping appear when transactions are allowed to accumulate.

It is the adviser's obligation to examine and supervise the treasurer's accounts at frequent and regular intervals. The adviser is responsible for protecting the student, the school, the organization, and himself or herself. At the end of the school year, the books should be audited by the school bookkeeper. The treasurer must work closely with the school bookkeeper throughout the year to ensure accuracy and correctness in the financial management and reporting activities.

In all cases, advisers and student councils must adhere to school and district policies regarding the raising, maintenance, and disbursement of all funds. 🔥

CHAPTER 10

Student Council Committees

Much of an effectively organized student council's work is delegated to committees and small groups. Most councils have several committees functioning at the same time, each concentrating its energies on specific duties.

While committees allow a council to deal with many problems at once, they can also contribute to a substantial communication problem if they don't inform one another about their progress. To prevent a communication breakdown, most councils appoint one person, often the vice president, to coordinate committee activities. Coordination can be very involved because a council committee can be engaged in more than one project at a time.

Types of Committees

Committees are formed for specific purposes and may be used to do the following:

- Plan specific activities
- Brainstorm about a project
- Present the best ideas to the large group
- Investigate issues and report the findings to the large group
- Perform specific work (sell tickets, clean up after a dance, etc.)
- Get more done in less time by delegating responsibilities
- Represent the council at official functions

Because there are many different purposes for committees, there are different kinds of committees.

EXAMPLES

Standing committees are defined in the bylaws as

those committees appointed or elected for an entire year. Their work is not necessarily limited to one project. One example is a committee appointed or elected for the school year to plan all student assemblies. A standing committee might use several special committees throughout the year to do the actual work on each assembly. Other typical standing committees include membership, service projects, spirit, and elections.

Special committees (often called ad hoc committees) are appointed for a specific purpose and disband once they have accomplished their goal. A Harvest Dance committee would be a special committee that would plan and do the work for one event—the dance. Special committees are assigned their specific responsibilities by the general assembly.

Those responsibilities should be practical, reasonable, and clearly stated by the general assembly. If, however, the committee members are unclear about their assignments, the chair should immediately seek clarification from the vice president or officer assigned to coordinate committees.

Executive committees have a different purpose and structure from standing and special committees and are made up of officers, committee chairs, or an elected board. They plan large group meetings, and initiate and organize activities. Often this group recommends the formation of standing or special committees to carry out the plans it makes. The executive committee reviews major items and makes recommendations before reporting to the full council.

Committee Functions

Every committee must have a clearly defined reason for existing, and every committee member must understand that reason. A committee’s job might be to advise, coordinate, or get specific work done.

Regardless of what type of committee is formed, committee members must understand exactly what the committee is supposed to accomplish.

Advisory committees are formed to study a

problem, report back to the large group with facts and figures, and make recommendations.

Coordinating committees are convened to lay out a general plan or direction and act as a liaison with other committees or perhaps as an “umbrella” committee that coordinates the operation of special committees.

Work committees have a specific job to complete or goal to accomplish.

TYPICAL STANDING COMMITTEES

Following are examples of typical standing committees often established by student councils.

- **Alumni**—coordinates all alumni activities
- **Assemblies**—organizes and plans all assemblies
- **Budget/Finance**—prepares budget for the school year and proposes and carries out money-raising projects
- **Building and Grounds**—responsible for keeping the courtyard and school grounds neat
- **Bulletin Boards/Showcases**—makes bulletin boards and exhibits for showcases advertising projects and displaying different aspects of the school and activities program
- **Constitution**—revises constitution annually and distributes copies to the members
- **Dances**—holds dances through-

out the year for the student body

- **Exchange**—organizes exchanges with local high schools
- **Elections**—coordinates school-wide elections
- **Evaluation**—evaluates all projects done by the council to determine their level of success and to make recommendations for future use
- **Homecoming**—plans annual homecoming activities
- **Marquee**—places all information on school marquee
- **Orientation/Hospitality**—greet new students throughout the year, holds receptions and conducts orientation of new students
- **Publications**—in charge of newsletters or reports to be distributed
- **Publicity**—responsible for any publicity needed for school-related activities

- **Scholarships**—coordinates the awarding of scholarships to graduating seniors; recommends scholarship amount and criteria for selection of recipient
- **Scrapbook**—makes scrapbook of the year for the council, with pictures, news clippings, etc.
- **Spirit/Sportsmanship**—conducts pep rallies, spirit weeks, and other school spirit projects; also plans activities that aid in fostering good sportsmanship
- **Student Recognition**—responsible for recognizing student achievement of all kinds
- **Student-Teacher Relations**—plans projects and activities to help promote better student/faculty/administration relations

Some committees perform many of these functions at different points.

What Committees Are Needed?

One place to start is to organize your council to meet its main functions. You could divide your committees into areas such as student voice and civic engagement, service/service learning, and social activities. Under these main areas, agree upon what needs to be done, and then establish committees to do it. Unfortunately, many councils appoint committees first and then decide their purpose.

The needs of the school can be determined in a number of ways, including opinion polls, feedback from representatives, letters to the school newspaper, school tradition, past activities, attendance records, financial records, examination of the curriculum, surveys taken by the guidance office, general lunchroom conversation, and suggestion boxes. NatStuCo's RSVP process is also a way to get opinions from all the students in the school and helps to engage them in your projects. As Dr. Earl Reum said, "People tend to support what they help to create."

After determining student needs, the executive committee should determine committee titles and responsibilities.

This planning can be done by the newly elected officers, but committees should be periodically reviewed by the executive committee during the year. The constitution and bylaws provide for flexibility in committees' undertakings, but they also should be checked to ensure that a committee is acting within its limits.

Committee Structure

Several elements should be considered when establishing the structure of a committee.

COMMITTEE SIZE

The size of the committee depends on its assignment. Obviously, a committee decorating a hall for a dance will probably have more members than a committee that is investigating the cost of bands. In some situations, it is better to have too many people on a committee than too few, as is the case with a committee

assigned the job of cleaning up after a school rally.

Here are some general rules about committee size:

- The ideal size for groups attempting to discuss and develop ideas is between five and seven people. With fewer than five people, there is not the variety of perspectives needed; with more than seven people, members may become frustrated because of the number of others who also want to speak.
- Members of a working committee should have enough to keep busy. People who show up to work on an assignment but find nothing to do may be reluctant to become involved again.
- Members should not be overworked—the quality of their project will diminish, and they may not want to help in the future.
- Members of a decision-making committee must be given all relevant information prior to the committee meeting.

CHAIR

Every committee needs a leader. The chair has the final responsibility for the success of the committee and must work with the members to decide what has to be done, who will do it, where it will be done, and when it must be completed. The chairperson also needs to know and communicate how much authority the committee has.

To achieve this, the chairperson should:

- Have a clear understanding of the goal and authority of the committee.
- Communicate that goal to the members of the committee.
- Schedule meeting time and place, notify members, and insist on attendance (a reminder phone call the night before can be valuable).
- Establish an agenda and procedures for the meetings to ensure effective communication.
- Appoint a committee secretary and ensure that a written record of each meeting is kept and final reports are done as needed.
- Delegate the work to committee members—appoint or elect a secretary or recorder, a treasurer (if needed), etc., and establish small groups for specific tasks (subcommittees).

- Set deadlines for completion of tasks.
- Follow up on progress of specific tasks.
- Participate in committee discussions and encourage others to do so, realizing the chair’s role is to facilitate the group, not dominate it.
- Complete a monthly committee report, as required by the executive committee.
- Present reports to the general assembly or executive committee.

Schools that hold officer elections in the spring give the new officers an opportunity to make standing committee chair appointments before school is out. This gives outgoing chairs time to orient the new chairs to their committee duties.

Chairs for standing committees are usually appointed by the president, working in conjunction with the other officers and the adviser, and serve on the executive committee. Chairs for special committees are appointed by either the general assembly or the president.

MEMBERS

The committee members have equally important responsibilities. Without their dedication, the committee will fail. Committee members must do the following:

- Know the purpose of the committee.
- Understand the specific task they have been assigned.
- Attend all the meetings.
- Participate in planning, share ideas, and ask questions.
- Commit to completing their work on time
- Keep track of supplies used, money spent, etc.
- Be respectful of the chairperson and other members.
- Keep the full committee up to date on the tasks they have been assigned.

Whenever any student in school is eligible to join a council committee, the council increases its communication with the student body.

If councils want student body members to serve on various committees, they must undertake active publicity and recruitment campaigns. The old excuse that “We announced a sign-up over the public

address system, but no one signed up” is more likely an indication of inadequate publicity rather than lack of interest.

When considering the makeup of a committee, select younger members to gain experience for the following year’s group in addition to upperclassmen, who often make up the majority of a committee’s membership.

The president is an ex officio member of all committees, entitled to all the privileges of membership without the requirement of attendance. The president should not be counted in determining a committee’s quorum.

Appointing Special (Ad Hoc) Committees

Special committees are formed when a motion made in a business meeting refers a specific matter to a committee. The general assembly frequently appoints special committees to work on particular projects.

Some councils call them ad hoc committees. Once these special committees achieve their purposes, they are disbanded.

The motion to create a special committee states exactly what the committee is to do and includes:

- A statement of who will serve on the committee or the number of people needed and how they are to be appointed
- A brief, precise description of the committee’s assignment
- The date or time by which the committee is to report back to the assembly

If the motion names the committee members, the first person named is the chairperson. If only a chairperson is named, that person is able to select the members.

EXAMPLE 1: NAMING THE MEMBERS

“Madam Chairperson, I move to appoint a committee of Linda, Sandy, John, and Jeremy to investigate the cost and quality of new computers, and report its findings and recommendations back to the general assembly in two weeks.”

EXAMPLE 2: MEMBERS TO BE APPOINTED

“Mr. Chairperson, I move to refer this main motion to a committee of five people, to be appointed by the president, to investigate the possible legal problems in students leaving school property for lunch, and have it report to the general assembly not later than three meetings from now.”

Examples of Committees and Their Activities

The following describes a typical project area often undertaken by student councils—homecoming—including possible committee breakdowns.

HOMECOMING

Homecoming can be the biggest school event each fall. It usually occurs early in the school year and, therefore, requires planning prior to the start of school. Because so many council and student body members are involved, communication and delegation of responsibilities are vital. Some of the items for consideration when planning homecoming are:

- A schedule of the event showing each step or activity
- A work timeline
- Keep accurate records of all expenses and revenue.
- Keep written summary of committee activities and recommendations.
- Involve as many students as possible.
- Committee responsibilities

Some committee possibilities are:

Pageant committee, which can oversee election of royalty, election method and ballots, publicity, flowers, and crowns for court.

Assembly committee, to determine location and plan program with speakers, entertainment, etc.

Parade committee, which obtains parade permit, plans route, arranges police escort, handles parade entry request procedures, determines placement of floats, appoints float judges, and determines judging categories.

Bonfire committee to obtain permits, request fire department assistance, fire materials, and develop program.

Half-time activities committee oversees band, rehearsals, cars for royalty, winning floats, and announcer.

Homecoming dance committee plans and obtains decorations, DJ, refreshments, cleanup, and chaperones.

Publicity committee can seek coverage of local newspaper, radio, TV, and school newspaper; create posters; and make daily announcements.

Meeting Time for Committees

Because of schedules, committees often meet during non-school hours. Consequently, students who cannot arrive early or remain after school are excluded from participation. Recognizing this problem, some schools schedule activity periods during the school day for school clubs, organizations, and committees. If committee meetings are scheduled during school time, it is important that they in no way interfere with academic pursuits. For example, “brown bag” committee meetings can be held at lunch where members discuss business while eating lunch. Sometimes student schedules can be revised so those with study period the same hours can serve on a committee.

Committee meetings should be announced well in advance, allowing members to make the necessary arrangements to attend. A majority of the committee members can schedule a meeting, as can the chair, president, or adviser.

Committee Reports

Keeping good records and informing the larger group of their plans and accomplishments are other important functions of committees. A secretary or recorder appointed by the chair should keep detailed notes (called minutes) of each meeting. Minutes include the names of those attending, summaries of group discussions, members’ progress reports, and action taken (recommendations or decisions).

When a committee’s work is done or a specific project is finished, a final report is written. The final report should include:

- Name of committee, names of chairperson and members

- Date work was conducted and number of meetings held
- Summary of activities and costs
- Evaluation—what worked and didn't work
- Committee suggestions
- Signature of chair or secretary

One kind of committee report is a monthly projects report, submitted in writing to the vice president, covering the actions of a committee over the previous 30 days. These reports not only keep the vice president and, in turn, the executive committee, informed about the committee's actions, but they are also valuable records for the years to come. It is recommended that these reports also be filed or saved in electronic form to provide a guide for similar projects in the future.

A second kind of committee report is made directly to the general assembly and contains either recommendations for the assembly to act upon or a list of facts that the assembly should have on record.

The assembly handles a factual report differently from a report with recommendations. With a report containing only facts, such as one offered by the social committee on the results of a dance, the general assembly need not vote on adopting it, since accurate facts cannot be disputed.

However, if a report contains recommendations, these recommendations should be introduced, discussed, and voted upon by the assembly during the standing or special committee reports period of the meeting.

The following reporting list of a detailed committee report taken from *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised*, can be modified to meet the needs of each situation:

- A description of the manner in which the committee undertook the assignment
- The facts discovered or the information gathered
- The conclusions, as derived from the facts and information
- Motions, resolutions, and recommendations developed

The committee chair usually distributes copies and reads the committee report to the assembly, stating the recommendations last. The committee chair then

moves to adopt the committee's recommendations, if any.

The recommendations are discussed and disposed of while still under the appropriate section of "committee reports" in the order of business on the agenda. If the committee offers several recommendations, there need be only one motion for adoption. However, each recommendation can be individually considered and voted on if the assembly, by a majority vote, decides to "divide the question."

Implementing Committee Assignments

Some assignments that committees receive are in the form of direct instructions from the general assembly. Other assignments are general in their instructions, as is the case with standing committees whose only directions may be a few sketchy sentences in the by-laws. Nonetheless, once a committee decides upon a project, it must know how to implement it. This stage of implementation is crucial because the world's best idea is useless unless it can be effectively acted upon.

Group Dynamics in Committee Meetings

Some groups and committees spend all their energy arguing or doing everything except the group's assigned responsibilities. To prevent this from happening, it is necessary to understand some of the problems groups face and how to solve them.

The actions and comments of group members affect how the group handles its jobs or performs its tasks—this is called task behavior. The way the group members try to maintain a friendly working atmosphere is called maintenance behavior. Frequently, a member's actions affect task and maintenance issues of the group at the same time.

TASK BEHAVIORS

Task behaviors are important to the group because they are intended to solve the assigned problems, finish the job, meet the task, etc. Anyone who has worked in groups or committees realizes that not all actions help the group finish its job. Obviously people can

perform helpful, positive task actions or harmful, negative ones.

Some useful, positive task behaviors are:

- Brainstorming with ideas from everyone
- Summarizing ideas; expanding on or paraphrasing what has been said
- Suggesting goals, giving direction, moving the group along a new path
- Getting the group to present more information or idea
- Giving information or ideas
- Seeking opinions, feelings, feedback, and clarification
- Polling and questioning to see if everyone agrees or offering a decision or conclusion for the group to accept or reject

Some task behaviors that have negative effects on attaining group goals are:

- Trying to discuss a topic without having agreed on goals for the discussion
- Getting sidetracked from the subject; talking about personal experiences unrelated to the topic
- Starting critical discussion before a large number of ideas have been collected
- Stressing the negative (“We can’t do it,” “The idea isn’t any good,” “It’s pointless to try that,” etc.)

MAINTENANCE BEHAVIORS

While task behaviors are going on, the group is also trying to maintain a friendly feeling among the members. These maintenance behaviors are important because people prefer to work in a comfortable emotional atmosphere.

The following maintenance behaviors can contribute to a positive emotional climate:

- Releasing tension by joking, laughing, etc.
- Patching up differences between people; attempting to reconcile differences
- Encouraging people to contribute to the discussion—frequently referred to as “gatekeeping” because the gate is kept open for more people to enter into the conversation
- Compromising or admitting a mistake
- Being warm, friendly, and responsive to others;

praising others and their ideas

- Testing to see if the group is satisfied with the procedure and guidelines for the discussion

Just as some task behaviors are harmful to getting the job done, some maintenance behaviors are harmful to the group’s efforts to maintain a friendly working atmosphere.

Some negative maintenance behaviors are:

- Being aggressive, giving “snappy” answers, etc.
- Interrupting someone who is speaking
- Ignoring someone’s question
- Goofing off
- Acting indifferent or unconcerned; being passive or not involved in the group tasks
- Believing there is only one solution or approach to the task or problem

Leadership in Small Groups

Even if a group or committee’s work is clearly defined, there’s a variable that members will have to deal with: leadership style.

A leader who makes and directs all group decisions is called autocratic. This style might be effective in getting a task done, but in the long run, the group members will probably develop negative task and maintenance behaviors, especially toward the leader, which will damage the ability of the group to function. For instance, the members may feel that their ideas are not respected or dealt with fairly. In addition, they may not feel enough commitment to the decisions of the autocratic leader to devote themselves to trying to make those decisions work.

A second kind of leader, one who gives the group little or no direction, provides laissez-faire leadership. Sometimes this leader really doesn’t care how the job gets done, or may feel that group members will know how to proceed without direction. However, the committee or group may have difficulty understanding exactly what its job or task as a group is, and might not know what position and authority the leader should have within the group.

A third, and recommended, approach to small-group leadership is the democratic style, which involves a widespread sharing of ideas with

considerable discussion among group members. The leader may suggest ideas but basically follows the decisions of the group.

Because there is so much emphasis on member participation, no one person can hope to notice and meet all the task and maintenance needs that arise in a rapidly moving discussion. Usually, different people will see and respond to different needs as the discussion continues.

The person or persons who see and respond to those needs are leaders in that particular situation. A person appointed or elected to fill the position of “group chair” or “committee leader” should expect leadership help to come from other members in situations they deal with best.

In fact, with a democratic group that meets several times, one person usually handles many of the task needs (task leader) while another person handles a large portion of the maintenance issues (maintenance leader). It seems that if a person is trying to keep the group focused on getting the job done (task), it is too much to expect him or her to also be fully aware of people’s feelings (maintenance). Obviously, each kind of leader needs the help of the other. Identify these types of leaders and try to appoint at least one of each per committee. This will make a balanced, well-organized group.

In short, a democratic group can expect to have one person who specializes in getting the task done, another person who tries to maintain a friendly working atmosphere, and several other members who at various times help both kinds of leaders. 🔥

CHAPTER 11

Projects: Plan, Implement, and Evaluate

Student councils can positively impact a school when their projects reach out to include everyone and appeal to even the most indifferent student. To have this positive effect, projects and activities should be energetic, exciting, and meaningful.

In their efforts to represent all students, councils provide a variety of opportunities for students to express themselves. One of the most important functions is to sponsor student projects. (See project examples in Appendix 4.) The majority of student councils manage their own projects, but they can also coordinate or assist with projects of other school clubs or organizations.

By planning projects, students develop leadership skills in decision-making and working toward a common goal, expand social relationships with others, explore areas of personal and educational interest, and become part of the school or community.

Ideally, projects offer these benefits to organizers and participants. In essence, each project is an indication of how well the council measures the interests or needs of the entire student body.

Project Guidelines

An organization's success or failure often depends on the outcome of its projects. Much planning, work, and effort must go into each project. Projects should do the following:

- Extend the goals and purposes of the council.

Projects should not be undertaken simply to prove that the council is busy or because “that’s the way it’s always been.”

- Provide educational or social value and be within the ability and comprehension of council members.
- Provide an organizational plan with a budget.
- Carefully follow local and state laws that regulate sales when the project involves selling.
- Be planned according to the interests of a large number of the members and involve a large number of participants.
- Encourage initiative, creativity, responsibility, and cooperation.
- Be evaluated upon completion. Evaluations should include remarks by those who planned the project and by those who participated in or received the benefits of the project. An unsuccessful project should serve as a valuable learning experience.

How to Get Started

To engage student interest and avoid scheduling problems, councils should plan their projects systematically. Prior to the start of the school year, the executive committee—and possibly the entire council—should develop an overall plan for the year. Here is an outline of a process that the executive committee can follow:

1. List the general areas upon which the council

THE 12 W'S OF PROJECT PLANNING

Planning any activity requires careful thought and preparation. Before stepping into action, be sure that you can answer the following questions:

1. **WHAT** are you planning to do?
 2. **WHY** do you want to do this project?
 3. **WHEN** and **WHERE** will the activity take place?
 4. **WHO** will benefit from the project?
 5. **WHAT** staff members will need to approve the project?
 6. **WHAT** funds are needed?
 7. **WHEN** will the basic planning be done?
 8. **WHAT** committees are necessary?
 9. **WHAT** kind of publicity is needed?
 10. **WHO** deserves a special thank-you?
 11. **WAS** the project worthwhile?
 12. **WHAT'S** next? **WHERE** do we go from here?
-

wishes to focus. These might include community service, school service, career development, fund-raising, social functions, and school spirit.

2. Conduct brainstorming sessions on each area and propose several activities.
3. Review the evaluations of the previous year's projects.
4. Compare this year's proposed list with last year's list and make adjustments.
5. Weigh any suggestions for program expansion or cutbacks in specific areas, making sure that the treasurer is actively involved.

6. Prepare a draft calendar of the activities for the year to make sure the council does not take on too many projects at a time.
7. Submit recommendations about program expansion or cuts to the appropriate committees via the committee chairperson.

Preparing an Effective Survey

The council may want to develop and administer a survey to get students' opinions on its project ideas. It may also use surveys to help evaluate projects. Here are some guidelines for preparing effective surveys:

1. Determine the length of the survey. Shorter surveys usually have a better chance of being completed and returned than longer ones.
2. Determine the types of questions to ask. There are four possibilities:
 - *Essay:* What is your opinion of the student council dance held last Saturday, January 10? Please comment on the music, ticket cost, decorations, and anything else you wish to include.
 - *Short answer:* Please nominate three juniors who you believe meet the criteria for the annual Student Leadership Award.
 - *Multiple choice:* Please indicate which type of student assembly you like best. Check only one.
 - Guest speaker
 - Film
 - Musical performance
 - Panel discussion or debate
 - No preference
 - *Scaled preference:* If the school cafeteria were open for breakfast from 7:30 to 9:00 a.m. every day and served doughnuts, juice, and milk (check only one):
 - I would buy breakfast every day.
 - I would buy breakfast at least three times a week.
 - I would buy breakfast once a week.
 - I would buy breakfast occasionally.
 - I would seldom or never buy breakfast.
3. Determine the purpose of the questions. Do the

questions really measure what they're intended to measure? For example, if the council wants to find out how many students would attend a pep rally at 7:00 p.m. next Friday, the following question would not give them an accurate answer. "Do you like the idea of having a pep rally?" Ask instead: "If the student council sponsored a pep rally at 7:00 p.m. next Friday at the football field, how likely are you to attend?"

4. Based on the purpose of the survey, determine who will receive it.
5. Determine when and how the survey should be distributed. Surveys distributed or deployed to students on Friday afternoon, to be returned the following Tuesday, might get lost during the weekend. If the survey is conducted online, it's still important to give the students several days to complete and submit their responses.
6. Determine a logical order for questions. Short, easy questions often make a good beginning and a good end.
7. Determine whether the survey can be easily tabulated. Do you have time to read a large number of essay responses? Are the multiple-choice questions easy to tabulate? (Many electronic survey platforms provide automatic tabulation to facilitate your analysis.)
8. Share the results of your survey with the council and then the student body.

Planning Projects at the Committee Level

Before a committee jumps into a project, it should prepare a strategy and budget. Planning should be a logical process that increases the chances for the committee's success. (See sample planning forms in Appendix 2.)

- Establish goals. Ask the committee, "Exactly what do we want to accomplish?" When writing out project goals, do not use vague words such as "many," "some," "a lot," etc. Be specific. Not, "We hope a lot of students attend the dance," but, "Our goal is to have 50 percent of the student body attend the dance."

MIDDLE LEVEL PROJECT PLANNING

Advisers should evaluate the age-appropriateness of an activity before a middle level student council schedules and holds it. Applied in this setting, age-appropriateness refers to the value of an activity regarding its impact on the emotional, intellectual, physical, ethical, and psychological needs of the early adolescent. As many of the student leaders on a middle level council will have friends and siblings at the local high school, a number of their ideas will involve the replication of projects and activities they have heard taking place in the upper grades. In most cases, these activities can be easily adapted for use at the middle level.

-
- Examine the current position. By comparing where the committee or council is now to where it wants to be in the future, one gets an accurate picture of what the project should accomplish.
 - Solicit ideas for projects. At this creative stage of planning, ideas are brainstormed. Quantity, rather than quality, is emphasized. Encourage committee members to suggest their craziest ideas!
 - Establish guidelines for selecting a project. In this stage, the committee lists all the factors it must evaluate before a project can be selected, including financial limitations, available facilities, planning time, number of people willing to be involved, season of the year, etc.
 - Select the project. Keeping in mind the goals as well as the guidelines, choose the project that seems most likely to meet your objectives. Be realistic—if the council needs to raise \$1,000, selling packages of chewing gum for 10 cents each is probably not a

wise choice. If the council wants a foreign exchange student to enroll in September, starting the proceedings in May will doom the project to failure.

- Outline the anticipated costs and income for the project.

Getting Projects Off the Ground

Making an idea into an exciting and stimulating event is a challenging task that requires planning, caution, and foresight. At many points along the way, something can go wrong that may hinder the success of the

effort. However, if a committee proceeds carefully, it can usually work out any problems it encounters.

The following suggestions will help get the project off to a good start:

- Make sure that the project has received the proper approval and full support of the council.
- Establish written project goals.
- Clear the project with the adviser and principal before any planning or organizing begins.
- Determine exactly what the council wants the committee to do. The committee should work from

FUNDRAISING

While fundraising should not be the main purpose of a student council, it is a common activity that enables student councils to provide the additional financial support often needed to help them achieve their goals. The following general checklist for fundraising can be customized for your particular needs and the requirements of your school district.

- Organize a fundraising steering committee
- Review school policies and procedures for fundraising
- Fill out a fundraiser intent form (including budget) and file it in the activities office
- Secure approval by adviser, principal, school board, or other authority as determined by local policy
- Establish a timeline and schedule it on the master school calendar
- File meeting minutes showing student approval in the activities office
- Consider several vendor choices and research each vendor thoroughly
- Conduct a group meeting to cover the details of the sale
- Determine incentives
- Acknowledge parent and student responsibility
- Sign contract with the vendor
- Hold sale kick-off event
- Create and distribute individual student record sheets
- Deposit money daily
- Verify record sheets
- Issue purchase order for sale inventory
- Initial inventory received, counted, and secured
- Secure merchandise during delivery period
- Secure and return unsold merchandise and complete final inventory
- Conduct final reconciliation of the funds raised
- Have final bill approved by students and adviser
- Hold evaluation and recognition meeting
- Write up final reports
- Organize and file notes, records, and evaluations.

written instructions whenever possible.

- Work with the treasurer to design a project budget and ways to minimize costs.
- Prepare a timeline and responsibility chart for members. Make sure everyone understands the assignment.
- Publicize the project through all appropriate channels.
- Secure necessary facilities (classroom, gym, etc.).
- Obtain adult chaperones, if necessary (faculty members, parents).
- Submit periodic reports to the student council officer in charge of projects.
- Develop a list of phone numbers and addresses to help future committees and give it to the appropriate officer for filing.
- Implement the project. If more help is needed, ask for it.
- Clean up after the project.
- Pay bills promptly and submit all records of financial activities to the council treasurer.
- Complete an official evaluation report. State how well the objective was met.
- File a complete project report in the student council records. As you think of ways to improve the project in the future, write them down immediately for future reference. Make a checklist that tells the following year's chair exactly what steps are involved in running the project.

Evaluating Projects and Activities

Written evaluations should be prepared for all major projects. In addition to a final written report, evaluation remarks should be noted throughout the planning and progress of the project. The opinions of planners and participants should be included.

The following suggestions may be helpful:

- When evaluating during the planning stages, focus on group cooperation, time pressure, clarity of purpose, specific problems encountered, etc.
- Determine whether you want objective or subjective data for the evaluation. Objective data include attendance figures, number of hours expended, costs, comparisons to past years' figures, etc. Sub-

jective data are opinions and feelings about the project. Both kinds of data can be valuable.

- Decide how to gather the data: questionnaires, interviews, "grapevine," etc.
- File written evaluations with the council secretary.
- Determine the interval of evaluation. Would an evaluation concerning the effectiveness of a leadership training day be more effective after three months than immediately following the day's program? Will evaluating the program immediately and then again in three months provide useful information? (Keep in mind that an immediate evaluation will provide different information than one completed at a later date.)
- Evaluate the project, not the personalities. Also, be careful of subjective value statements (e.g., "The decorations were shabby"), unless the evaluation serves a definite purpose.
- Remember that a random sample can reduce evaluation time when compared to asking for everyone's opinions.
- State whether or not the project could be successfully repeated.
- Keep all reports on file. 🔥

NATIONAL STUDENT PROJECT DATABASE

Your best resource for discovering projects is the National Student Project Database, a robust repository of thousands of tried-and-true projects undertaken by NatStuCo councils and chapters of the National Honor Societies.

SUBMITTING YOUR PROJECTS

It takes only a few minutes to add a project to the National Student Project Database and there's no

limit to how many projects you can submit. Anyone can submit a project, so encourage other student groups on campus to add their projects too. The database has an advanced search system that allows visitors to find projects in several different ways, including type, school size, state, and keywords. Information is divided into five short sections, and required fields are marked with a red asterisk. The project submission sections include:

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Submit a Project". It is divided into five sections, each with a horizontal line separator:

- 1. School Information**: This section contains several input fields:
 - School Name***: A text input field with the placeholder "Enter a school name".
 - City***: A text input field with the placeholder "Enter a city".
 - State***: A dropdown menu with the placeholder "- Select -".
 - Zip Code***: A text input field with the placeholder "Enter a zip code".
 - School Level***: A dropdown menu with the placeholder "- Select -".
 - School Size***: A dropdown menu with the placeholder "- Select -".
 - School Type***: A dropdown menu with the placeholder "- Select -".A "Next" button with a right-pointing arrow is located at the bottom right of this section.
- 2. Project Information**: A section with a horizontal line separator below it.
- 3. Contact Information**: A section with a horizontal line separator below it.
- 4. Photos**: A section with a horizontal line separator below it.
- 5. Related Documents**: A section with a horizontal line separator below it.

Figure 1

School Information (Figure 1). The school information fields require you to enter the basic demographic information on your school including school name; city, state, and zip code; and the school level, size, and type. This information helps others to identify your project in searches.

2. Project Information

Project Name*
Enter a project name

Project Category*
- Select -

Start Date*
mm / dd / yyyy

End Date*
mm / dd / yyyy

Student Organization*
- Select -

Project Scope*
- Select -

How many council/chapter members were involved in the project ? *

If applicable, what percent of the student body involved in the project (estimate) ? *

What is the estimated total number of community members involved in the project ? *

Identify the totals category:

Charitable Dollars Raised \$

Total (est.) Pennsds (e.g. food).

Total Items Collected (e.g. coats, blankets).

Total Pints Collected (e.g. blood).

Other (Identify)

Other (Quantity)

(Project Impact) Identify the audience supported by this project ?
- Select -

Estimate total persons/families that were assisted or impacted by this project.

Estimate the cumulative total of volunteer hours spent on the project ?

(if time permits) Add Global Citizenship strands.

Related Link(s)
Enter a related url

Project Summary*
Sample project summary

If you are submitting your project for a National Council of Excellence Award, the project summary must be a minimum 200 words in length.

Visual Text

This project supports the NASSP Student Leadership Initiative: Global Citizenship

Next

Figure 2

Project Information (Figure 2). In this section, you will enter the project name and classify it into one of 16 categories. You will also be asked when the project started and ended, which student organization implemented the project, and the project’s scope (local, state, etc.). Data fields allow you to enter specific numbers for such items as total volunteer hours and amounts raised or collected. There is also a field where you can enter links to photo albums, videos, or websites related to your project. The largest field is the project description where you can provide plenty of details about your project and how you organized and implemented it. Under the project description field check the appropriate box to indicate if the entry is a Project of Excellence and indicate its award year.

Note: Since 2015, National Council of Excellence applicants have been required to submit three to four projects as part of their award applications.

Submit a Project

1. School Information

2. Project Information

3. Contact Information

I am a :
- Select -

First Name*
Enter your first name

Last Name*
Enter your last name

Email*
Enter your email address

Phone*
Enter your phone number

Next

4. Photos

5. Related Documents

Figure 3

Contact Information (Figure 3). This section is private and visible only to NASSP staff members. It includes your name, email, and phone number in case we need to contact you. Occasionally we find a project that we want to know more about or feature in one of our NatStuCo publications.

NATIONAL STUDENT PROJECT DATABASE (CONTINUED)

Submit a Project

1. School Information

2. Project Information

3. Contact Information

4. Photos

Photo Upload Center

Max File Size: 8 MB
File Extensions Allowed: .jpg, .jpeg, .gif, .png

Browse... No file selected. Add More

Next →

5. Related Documents

Figure 4

Photos (Figure 4). Photos of your project are an important way to enhance summaries and illustrate what a project looks like as it is happening, as well as showing the front- and back-end efforts. You can upload several digital photos in high resolution files up to 8MB each. Share only your photos or ones that you have permission to upload.

Submit a Project

1. School Information

2. Project Information

3. Contact Information

4. Photos

5. Related Documents

Document Upload Center

Max File Size: 8 MB

Browse... No file selected. Add More

Review →

Figure 5

Related Documents (Figure 5). Do you have a sample form, ad, or letter that was an essential part of your project? You might help another council by uploading your documents to the database's document center, which allows applicants have been required to submit three to four projects as part of their award applications.

AFTER YOU ENTER YOUR INFORMATION

Before you submit your project, click the review button to confirm that all of the information is accurate. Once a project is submitted, only NatStuCo staff can edit the entry. An automatic confirmation will be sent to the email address entered into the contact information and will include an identification number that can be used to search for the project at a later time.

As a safeguard and to ensure quality, every project entered is reviewed by an NASSP Student Programs staff member and must be approved before it is visible on the database. Upon approval, an automated email is sent to confirm that the project is available for viewing and will include a certificate from NASSP acknowledging the council's project contribution.

CHAPTER 12

National Student Council Standards and Recognition for Excellence in Student Councils, Student Leaders, and Advisers

National Recognition

In addition to recognition that your student leaders and council may receive at the local and state levels, NatStuCo offers opportunities for national recognition to those councils, students, and advisers that excel in their leadership roles and responsibilities. National Student Council sponsors awards and programs that spotlight outstanding student councils, advisers, and individual student leaders. As NatStuCo members, you are encouraged to seek national recognition for the leadership and dedication given to the school and the community by the student council and for the exemplary skills and abilities demonstrated by its students and adviser.

National Council of Excellence Awards

The NatStuCo National Council of Excellence awards provide national recognition for student councils that maintain strong year-round programs that improve the

school climate by encouraging students to have a voice in school and community affairs, encouraging civic engagement, promoting service and service learning, and providing activities in which all students can participate. This award provides broader recognition for the most worthy efforts of NatStuCo member schools. The evaluation process also engages the principal and serves as a tool to help schools assess their student council programs. All councils meeting the standards in their application will be named a National Council of Excellence.

WHY DOES NATSTUCO SPONSOR THE NATIONAL COUNCILS OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS?

Student councils look different in every school. They have different purposes and are structured in ways that best serve their students and fit into the curriculum and schedule of each school. Despite their differences, the core responsibility of student councils in schools is

to serve the student body as a conduit for the expression of students' ideas and as a catalyst for engaging students in student-led projects and activities.

WHY SHOULD YOUR STUDENT COUNCIL APPLY?

Student councils that are designated a National Council of Excellence have demonstrated a proficiency and quality in their programs that were measured against standards criteria developed by NatStuCo.

Student councils earning the National Council of Excellence award receive national recognition, including an official letter and certificate from National Student Council and NASSP. NASSP also provides a press release template that schools can use to announce and explain the recognition to local media. In addition, these student councils can announce and celebrate this achievement with the student body, faculty members, administrators, the school board, and the community. NatStuCo even provides tips for public relations in the Adviser Resource Center of the NatStuCo website: www.NatStuCo.org/arc.

NatStuCo has created specially designed recognition items to publicly honor National Councils of Excellence as well as their members and adviser. Among the items are pins and school banners. Just as schools honor sports teams and others, NatStuCo encourages schools to give their student councils the recognition they deserve for providing outstanding student leadership.

WHO CAN APPLY AND HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

All middle and high school student councils that are current members of NatStuCo are eligible to apply.

HOW DOES MY STUDENT COUNCIL BECOME A NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EXCELLENCE?

The quest to become a National Council of Excellence begins with a decision by the council to strive for the award. From there, it is a matter of reviewing the application to understand how to proceed. Student council members and advisers then work to organize and prepare evidence showing how the

council meets the National Council of Excellence standards.

Once the council collects evidence of achieving the standards, the council officers (or an appointed committee) and adviser prepare materials and meet with the principal. During the meeting, the officers and adviser will present their evidence. If the principal finds that the council qualifies as a National Council of Excellence, he or she will confirm it with a signature and provide a letter of recommendation to be included as part of the application.

To show that a school's student council is consistent in its practices and activities, the annual "council activity" period for the award is based on the calendar year that runs annually from January 1 to December 31, which allows student councils to provide evidence of spring, summer, fall, and winter activities. The deadline is February 15 of the following calendar year.

Application packets and additional support materials can be found at www.NatStuCo.org/ncoe.

WHAT ARE THE NATSTUCO STANDARDS FOR NATIONAL COUNCILS OF EXCELLENCE?

The standards for the National Council of Excellence awards reflect the core purposes and mission of student councils. Councils applying to be named a National Council of Excellence will be evaluated in such categories as governance, service, general activities, meetings, council operations, communications, and student involvement.

NatStuCo has established the following standards as a guide for student councils and to establish a level of excellence for student councils to aspire to achieve.

(Standards indicated by "middle level" or "high school" are unique for those levels. Other standards apply to both levels.)

A. Governance

1. **Constitution and Bylaws:** Student councils function according to their written constitutions and bylaws.

- Student councils must have a written constitution and/or bylaws and operate according to

the purposes and guidelines they set forth.

- A copy of the constitution is provided to every student council member and is available to all students.
 - Student councils have a structure of leadership that is student-focused.
2. **Elections:** Student councils sponsor general and/or special elections that reflect the democratic process and provide opportunities for students to practice civic responsibility.
- Student councils sponsor annual elections that reflect the democratic process and may include such features as voter registration, campaigning, and balloting.
 - Election/campaign rules are reviewed with all candidates and each is given a written copy.
 - Election ballots are handled in an ethical manner and results are appropriately and professionally announced.
3. **Meetings:** Student councils meet regularly throughout the school year to attend to council business.
- Student councils hold a minimum of one meeting each month during the school year, and provide a meeting calendar to members and appropriate administrators.
 - (*High school*) Meetings are run in accordance with standard practices (e.g., *Robert's Rules of Order*).
 - (*Middle level*) Student councils provide opportunities for students to apply standard practices during meetings and introduce students to basic parliamentary procedure or similar skills.

B. Service

1. **Participation in Service:** Student councils plan and sponsor service activities to benefit the school and its community and promote service to the student body.
- (*High school*) Student councils host a minimum of one service project each semester that is designed to engage large numbers of the student body.
 - (*Middle level*) Student councils sponsor a

minimum of one service project each year that specifically addresses the school's needs or otherwise provides aid to students or staff, and they encourage broad participation by the student body.

2. **Serving the Community:** Student councils work to improve their communities by planning and implementing various service projects; councils promote the importance of serving the community to the student body.
- Student councils sponsor a minimum of one service project each year that specifically addresses a need or provides assistance in the community.

C. General Activities and Operations

1. **Spirit and Social Activities:** Student councils work to improve school climate and increase student enthusiasm and participation in school life by planning and implementing spirit and social activities.
- Student councils plan and implement a minimum of two activities per year to strengthen student spirit and promote enthusiasm for school life.
 - Each year the student councils sponsor activities that reach out to diverse populations within the student body with the goal of providing activities for all students.
2. **Council Operations:** Student councils operate in responsible ways that demonstrate sound financial and membership recordkeeping, evaluation practices, and school involvement.
- Student council officers and advisers work to prepare an annual written budget and maintain accurate financial records.
 - Student councils keep records of membership and maintain historical records of their activities.
 - One or more student council officers and members meet regularly with the school principal or designee to discuss student and school-related issues.
 - At least one student council officer or other

council representative serves on a site-level committee that has input on decisions affecting the school.

3. **Fundraising:** Student councils plan and implement projects to raise funds for school-related activities and charitable giving.
 - Student councils sponsor a minimum of one fundraising project each year.
4. **Leadership Training:** Student councils provide leadership training opportunities for members and encourage advisers to participate in professional development.
 - Student council members participate in a minimum of two leadership training sessions or programs per year (in-house, online, or at conferences or workshops).
 - Student council advisers annually participate in a minimum of one professional development program or training session directly related to student council or student leadership.
5. **Communications:** Student councils communicate regularly with the student body in a variety of ways and provide opportunities for members to practice and demonstrate their communication skills.
 - Student councils provide regular updates to the student body and faculty.

D. Civic Engagement and Student Voice

1. **Civic-Based Activities:** Student councils employ various methods that encourage students to be involved in the community and increase awareness of citizenry and activism.
 - Student councils provide information to the student body that explains the civic connection to select council activities (elections, community service, student forums, etc.).
2. **Student Voice:** Student councils regularly seek out student opinion and create opportunities to include students in significant ways on committees and in activities.
 - Student councils provide forums or other activities that provide all members of the student body opportunities to express their views

and concerns and to suggest ideas for activities and improved school climate.

- Student councils encourage students to be involved in leadership and provide opportunities for interested members of the student body to participate in decision-making or planning committees.

NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader Program

The NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader program is a rigorous and challenging skill-demonstration-based recognition program created by National Student Council to identify outstanding individual student council leaders in high schools. Students named NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leaders will have proven their personal leadership abilities and knowledge as judged against the criteria established by National Student Council. The program is founded on the principles of NatStuCo and provides broad recognition for the most worthy student leaders.

Unlike scholarships or recognitions that have limited numbers of winners, all student council leaders attending NatStuCo member schools who successfully meet the criteria may be recognized as a NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader.

WHY DID NATSTUCO CREATE THE DISTINGUISHED STUDENT LEADER PROGRAM?

NatStuCo has historically promoted excellence in student leadership through its conferences, training programs, and resources that advisers can use to help students develop their leadership skills. As part of its refocusing efforts, National Student Council realized the need and opportunity to nationally recognize outstanding student councils and individual student leaders. The NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader program is based on standards that align to and support the National Councils of Excellence standards and is the conduit for NatStuCo to shine the spotlight on outstanding young leaders serving their schools and communities.

WHAT ARE THE GOALS OF THE DISTINGUISHED STUDENT LEADER PROGRAM?

The NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader program has five core goals:

- Give schools a tool that will enhance and improve their efforts to develop student leaders
- Challenge students to work for recognition that is based on their leadership abilities and knowledge
- Provide authentic assessment and national recognition
- Support the standards and goals of the National Council of Excellence awards
- Add value to students' college and scholarship applications

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A STUDENT TO BE A DISTINGUISHED STUDENT LEADER?

Students who are recognized as Distinguished Student Leaders will experience the personal satisfaction of having achieved national recognition by demonstrating to others their ability to perform as leaders.

For a school and student council, having one or more students recognized by NatStuCo is a testament to the strength and success of the student council program in developing and training student leaders. As students prepare for postsecondary education, they can include their NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader award among their honors and accomplishments on college and scholarship applications.

HOW DO STUDENTS BECOME DISTINGUISHED STUDENT LEADERS?

Students become Distinguished Student Leaders through a structured application process. Those applying must be members of a NatStuCo member council or in a leadership class or position in a NatStuCo member school, and must be in grades 9–12 at the time they submit their applications. Students work independently to create a portfolio of evidence demonstrating their skills and knowledge in such areas as general leadership, meeting management, project planning, service, team building, civic engagement, time management, and personal organization. They

must submit letters of recommendation from their adviser and the principal, along with all signatures verifying completion of the application process. Finally, they write an essay on a predetermined leadership topic and include it with their portfolio and application materials. Final assessment of each applicant's submissions will take place at NatStuCo's national office. Those found to have met the criteria will be named a NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader.

This rigorous program is self-paced with no deadlines and respects the academic challenges and busy activity calendars that top student council leaders maintain.

Final evaluations of a student's application will take approximately 2–4 weeks. Students are encouraged to establish their own timelines, especially if they want to include the award on college and scholarship applications.

The NatStuCo Distinguished Student Leader designation will be bestowed upon any student who has shown evidence of being a strong leader and has met the program criteria.

Applications and other resource materials are available at www.NatStuCo.org/distinguished-leaders.

National Adviser of the Year Awards

The National Student Council High School and Middle Level Adviser of the Year Awards honor Warren E. Shull, who founded National Student Council in 1931.

Given annually, the Shull Awards recognize high school and middle level student council advisers of exemplary character, leadership, and commitment to young people and their development as student leaders. Although the award singles out individuals on the state, regional, and national levels, the purpose of the award is to highlight the dedication and many contributions made by all student council advisers throughout the United States.

Applications for these awards are due in early December. From the state nominees, middle level and high school region finalists are selected. During the annual National Student Council Conference, finalists are recognized and two national winners are announced.

Visit www.NatStuCo.org/shull for more information. 🔥

APPENDIX 1

Value of Student Activities

Statement of the National Association of Secondary School Principals on Student Activities

PURPOSE

To affirm the importance of student activities and programs as a critical component of a student's education and to provide recommendations for their successful implementation in schools

ISSUE

Beyond the standard curriculum of required and elective courses (e.g., career and technical student organizations, academic clubs, clubs for the visual/performing arts), schools enhance student learning and development by offering a range of student activities. Activities can be classified into four distinct categories:

- Direct extensions of required or elective courses (science club, math club, dance club, etc.), including opportunities to participate in student recognition programs (e.g., National Honor Society, Quill and Scroll, Spanish Honor Society, Tri-M Honor Society).
- Clubs or activities that are expressions of student interest that may be interdisciplinary in nature or not have a direct curricular link (e.g., popular music club, skateboarding club).
- Student council or student government that serve as opportunities for students to engage in the democratic process and have a voice in the life of the school to the extent allowable by law, policy, or tradition.

- Interscholastic and intramural athletics that provide students opportunities for development through sport (football, track, tennis, cheerleading, etc.).

Research suggests that participation in student activities is associated with higher test scores, increased GPA, enhanced civic skills, better future job prospects, lower drop-out rates, and lower incidence of adverse behaviors.

NASSP GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Middle level and high schools provide for social as well as academic needs. Student activities are integral to an education, providing opportunities for all students to support and extend academic learning.
- Student activities are educational in nature and should be considered as part of the school's core mission.
- Student activities support the goal of teaching students to be responsible and give them opportunities that develop character, critical thinking, and problem-solving and leadership skills.
- Research has shown a strong relationship between participation in student activities and academic achievement.
- Membership in national and state student activities adds value to programs sponsored at the local level by providing training, unique opportunities for networking, and additional recognition for those involved.
- NASSP's *Breaking Ranks* framework for middle level and high school reform affirms the importance of student leadership and personalization as critical strategies to engage students in their own education.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL AND STATE POLICYMAKERS

- Recognize all activities approved by a middle level or high school for their contributions to the school's overall goals for young people.
- Encourage schools to engage as many students as possible in student activities and offer sufficient variety to appeal to a wide range of student interests.
- Encourage administrators, educators, student activity advisers, and the general public to use the term student activities instead of extracurricular activities. Student handbooks, school documents, and other communication should reflect this more current and accurate terminology.
- Ensure that activities are age-appropriate; non-discriminatory; well planned, organized, and implemented; supervised by professional staff; and evaluated on a regular basis.
- Ensure that participation in events sponsored by state and national organizations for youth be subject to identifiable minimum standards for the quality of the program, its content, and its practices regarding participant supervision and safety.
- Ensure that staff directing student activities receive professional development in the area of responsibility and appropriate compensation for the work provided while fulfilling this supervisory duty.
- Avoid establishing a hierarchy of student activities that leads to funding competition.

RESOURCES

Feldman, A. F., & Matjasko, J. L. (2005). The role of school-based activities in adolescent development: A comprehensive review and future direction. *Review of Educational Research*, 75(2).

Klesse, E. J. (1994). *The third curriculum II: Student activities*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

Klesse, E. J. (2004). *Student activities in today's schools: Essential learning for all youth*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Shelly, B. (2009, January). *Jump, shake your booty: The civic training of student council*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Southern Political Science

Association. New Orleans, LA. Retrieved February 9, 2009, from www.allacademic.com/meta/p283789_index.html. 🔥

Adopted November 9, 2002

Revised May 9, 2009

APPENDIX 2

Sample Forms

Many computer software applications have excellent form templates. The samples given here show the types of information that should be kept. Each student council should determine its own method of record keeping and develop the forms needed.

Index

- A. Meeting Agenda Outline
- B. Sample Meeting Agenda
- C. Project Planning Guide
- D. Motions Form
- E. Sample Budget Format
- F. Committee Assignment and Worksheet
- G. Committee Timeline Form
- H. Record Sheet for Taking Minutes
- I. Sample of Completed Basic Minutes
- J. Other Forms That Student Councils Use

Meeting Agenda Outline

I. CALL TO ORDER

The chairperson calls the meeting to order, preferably using a gavel.

II. ROLL CALL

Roll call can be time-consuming, especially if each person's name is called. Other ways to take roll include having assigned seats, passing around a sign-in sheet, and signing in or out with someone at the door. The recording secretary can take attendance, but it may be more advantageous to give this assignment to someone else and give the attendance sheet to the secretary for the minutes.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING)

Approval of the minutes can take a long time if they are read aloud. Save time by having the minutes distributed to members the day prior to the meeting or giving them out as everyone enters the meeting so people can read them silently. The chairperson should ask, "Are there any corrections or additions to the minutes?" If there are none, "They stand approved," or if corrections are made, "Stand approved as corrected."

IV. OFFICERS' REPORTS

Each officer should report on his or her work since the previous meeting. Officer reports should be brief, possibly with a time limit. To save time and ensure accuracy, they should be given in writing with a verbal summary or explanation.

If an officer makes a recommendation, its form and content should resemble a committee recommendation. After the report is given, the chairperson should restate the recommendation in the form of a main motion and ask for a second.

V. STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Each standing committee should give a report on its work since the previous meeting. Standing committees include committees that serve all year and are usually mentioned in the constitution/bylaws. The same rules apply as to the officer reports.

VI. SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Special committees are appointed for a limited time and specific purpose, and their existence terminates with their final report to the assembly. These reports should also be in writing with a verbal summary.

A detailed committee report that offers a recommendation for the assembly should include:

- A description of the way in which the committee undertook its task
- The information gathered and/or the facts discovered
- The findings or conclusions derived from the facts or information
- Resolutions or recommendations

VII. OLD BUSINESS/GENERAL ORDERS

Old business/general orders include:

- A question that was pending at the last session when it adjourned
- Any unfinished business that did not come up at the last session
- Any general orders from the last session that were not reached
- Matters made general orders by a majority vote
- A motion to take from the table is in order at this time if no motion is pending

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Motions that introduce new items of business or motions to take from the table are in order at this time. Motions are made, seconded, discussed, and voted upon. If more information is needed, the item can be left unfinished and be taken up under old business at the next meeting.

IX. ANNOUNCEMENTS

Announcements—committee meetings or other items of interest—must be made before the meeting is adjourned; motions are out of order at this time. The chairperson may make important announcements at any time during the meeting.

X. ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment ends not only the meeting but also the session. The next time the assembly convenes it must start from the beginning of the agenda. There is no debate on a motion to adjourn.

Sample Meeting Agenda

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL (KRISTEN, PRESIDENT)

II. READING OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (ASHOKA, SECRETARY)

III. REPORTS

• Officers

• Sponsor, Mr. Jenkins

- Leadership lesson on making motions and resolutions

• President, Kristen

- Presentation to Civitan Club, October 13 (notes in folder)
- State Workshop, November 17 (application in folder)

• Vice President, Imran

- Report from Principal's Advisory Group meeting (agenda in folder)

• Secretary, Carlos

- Amendment to add Service as a standing committee (proposal is in folder)
- Student council email is working! Last name and first initial @ourschool.k12.anywhere.us (smithj@ourschool.k12.anywhere.us)

• Treasurer, Sarah

- Account balance = \$895.25
- Recent activity: Blowpop suckers for staff appreciation \$42.75

• Committees

• Fall Dance Committee (Tim, Chair)

- Help Needed – decorating, ticket collection, setup, cleanup
- Details (music, food, drinks, game room, photos, giveaways)

• Amendment Committee (Cassandra, Chair)

- Service proposal change is in folder
- All students vote by next Thursday during first block

• Election Committee (Mayu, Chair)

- Candidates' meeting set
- Presentation by county elections officer, Ms. Johnson, during next meeting

IV. OLD BUSINESS

- Penny Wars Fundraiser: Cans need to be decorated, rules to be posted in homerooms

V. NEW BUSINESS

- Committee Amendment: add two at-large positions
- Student Parking Resolution: Reserve first-row spaces for students of the week

VI. PROGRAM

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Project Planning Guide

A. Fact Finding. How can your group find out more about the project—its possible good and bad points—in order to be prepared?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

B. Approval. Whose approval do you need to conduct the project?

	<i>Approval Needed?</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Person Assigned</i>	<i>OK?</i>
Principal	_____	_____	_____	_____
Adviser	_____	_____	_____	_____
Executive Committee	_____	_____	_____	_____
General Assembly	_____	_____	_____	_____
Student Body	_____	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____	_____

C. Resources. What resources will be needed for this project?

<i>Resources Needed</i>	<i>Where to Locate</i>	<i>Person to Obtain</i>	<i>OK?</i>
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____

D. Budget. This must be clearly planned and itemized.

<i>Item to Be Purchased</i>	<i>Anticipated Cost</i>	<i>Deadline</i>	<i>Buyer</i>	<i>Amount Paid</i>
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____

E. Publicity. What types of publicity do you need? What will be most suitable to the project and the audience?

<i>Item</i>	<i>Person Responsible</i>	<i>Deadline</i>
Handouts	_____	_____
P.A. Announcements	_____	_____
Bulletin Boards/Website	_____	_____
Newspaper Articles	_____	_____
Mass Media (radio, TV)	_____	_____
Other (Be creative!)	_____	_____

Motions Form

A form should be developed that is completed by the person making a motion at a meeting. This form assists the secretary in keeping accurate minutes and helps clarify exact motion wording to the members. Prior to voting on the motion the form is turned in to the secretary.

Name of person making motion: _____

Motion seconded by: _____

Exact wording of motion (please print): _____

Action taken on motion: Passed Failed Tabled

Sample Budget Format

School Year: _____

Account Name and Number	Budgeted	Actual	Difference
Income Accounts:			
1001: Homecoming tickets	\$1,250.00	\$1,275.00	(\$25.00)
1002: All school dance tickets	\$5,000.00	\$5,100.00	(\$100.00)
1003: In-kind donations			
Exec. office supplies	\$360.00	\$350.00	\$10.00
Exec. retreat supplies/meal	\$250.00	\$265.00	(\$15.00)
Assembly supplies	\$100.00	\$90.00	\$10.00
Assembly speaker	\$500.00	\$700.00	(\$200.00)
Dance decorations	\$300.00	\$310.00	(\$10.00)
Homecoming decoration/supply	\$250.00	\$300.00	(\$50.00)
Dance refreshments	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00
Dance DJ	\$0	\$400.00	(\$400.00)
Collection bags		\$0.00	\$0.00
Scantron forms	\$0.00	\$50.00	(\$50.00)
Totals	\$8,510.00	\$9,340.00	(\$830.00)

Committee Assignment and Worksheet for Initial Planning—Page 1 of 3

Date assigned by council: _____

Title of assignment: _____

Assignment of activity/event/project outline and outcome: _____

Committee chair: _____

Date event/project scheduled: _____

Selecting a plan for the activity (use a brainstorming method):

Proposed idea (done first)	Advantage	Disadvantage

(use more space on ruled paper if needed for more ideas)

Committee Assignment and Worksheet for Initial Planning—Page 2 of 3

Title of assignment: _____

Committee chair: _____

Steps to accomplish plan: _____

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

(for a large project/assignment use more space on another paper)

Person(s) responsible for each step (full name):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

6) _____

7) _____

8) _____

9) _____

10) _____

Requirements of plan (personnel, equipment, materials):

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Committee Assignment and Worksheet for Initial Planning—Page 3 of 3

Title of assignment: _____

Committee chair: _____

Projected cost/budget for materials or equipment:

Proposed idea (done first)	Advantage	Disadvantage
Totals		

Date worksheet submitted to adviser and officers for approval: _____

Committee Timeline Form—Page 1 of 3

Committee name: _____ Committee chair: _____

Scheduled meeting date/time/place: _____

Attendees: _____

Tasks for Plan 1: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 1: _____

Tasks for Plan 2: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 2: _____

Committee Timeline Form—Page 2 of 3

Committee name: _____ Committee chair: _____

Tasks for Plan 3: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 3: _____

Tasks for Plan 4: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 4: _____

Tasks for Plan 5: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 5: _____

Committee Timeline Form—Page 3 of 3

Committee name: _____ Committee chair: _____

Tasks for Plan 6: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 6: _____

Tasks for Plan 7: _____ Deadline for Completion: _____

Person(s) responsible for Plan 7: _____

Submit copies of this completed form to the vice president and adviser.

Record Sheet for Taking Minutes—Page 1 of 2

This can be set up in the computer using the agenda as the template. When taking minutes by hand and writing directly on this form, be sure to write or print clearly, leaving plenty of space between items. If taking minutes on a computer, have this form ready to key in as minutes are taken.

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Type of meeting: _____ Number attending: _____

Presiding officer: _____

REVIEW OF AGENDA

Agenda accepted as presented, motion by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Agenda accepted with the following additions/revisions:

1. _____

2. _____

Motion by: _____

Seconded by: _____

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes accepted as presented, motion by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Minutes accepted with the following additions/revisions:

1. _____

2. _____

Motion by: _____

Seconded by: _____

OFFICER REPORTS SUMMARY (reports attached)

President

Vice President

Treasurer

Secretary

Record Sheet for Taking Minutes—Page 2 of 2

COMMITTEE REPORTS SUMMARY (reports attached)

- Spirit/Social
- Service
- Faculty Relations
- Appreciation and Recognitions
- Elections and Policy
- Community Relations

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Topic: _____

Action or motions from previous meeting: _____

Motion: _____

Motion by: _____

Seconded by: _____

Discussion: _____

Vote count: YEA NAY

Action taken on motion: Passed Failed

NEW BUSINESS

Same as above

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Adjournment time: _____

Next meeting set for:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

Sample of Completed Basic Minutes—Page 1 of 2

Date: November 2, 2017 Time: 2:40 p.m.
Type of meeting: General all council meeting
Presiding officer: Cindy Rhee, President

Place: Little Theater
Number attending: 88

REVIEW OF AGENDA

Agenda accepted as presented, motion by: _____
Seconded by: _____

Agenda accepted with the following additions/revisions: _____
Add to unfinished business, report from Homecoming Dance committee, Megan Clark
Motion by: Erica Ajay
Seconded by: Max Sims

APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Minutes accepted as presented, motion by: San Tran
Seconded by: Cynthia Crews

Minutes accepted with the following additions/revisions:
1. _____
2. _____
Motion by: _____
Seconded by: _____

OFFICER REPORTS SUMMARY (REPORTS ATTACHED)

- President: Cindy Rhee spoke at the school district meeting on upcoming events and activities of the student council and other school clubs.
- Vice President: San Tran spoke at a PTA meeting asking for service project support.
- Treasurer: Trey Phillips gave the monthly financial report.
- Secretary: Marsha Brown gave an update on new computer software for the student council computer.

COMMITTEE REPORTS (REPORTS ATTACHED)

- Spirit/Social: Sid Mathers reported that the committee is on schedule and meeting all deadlines for completion of plans. Dance ticket sales are going extremely well, the DJ is contracted, and decoration supplies and food are ordered.

Sample of Completed Basic Minutes—Page 2 of 2

- **Service:** Ashley Smith reported the fall service project plans are nearly complete and that two organizations they are working with have identified eight families in need. They have put together a list of the food items, gifts, and chores that volunteers can provide for each family. Some of the items and gifts have already been collected. A list of needed items, gifts, or chores was given out and will be on the council website for donations. Student Council members will also be personally recruiting others to help.
- **Tutoring:** Doh Jung reported that a record number of middle level students are signed up for the Saturday morning tutoring sessions. Ten to 15 student council and honor society members volunteer each Saturday to assist in various subjects. Sign-up sheets and time schedules are available on the council website.
- **Faculty Relations:** Maggie Berwin reported that the monthly teacher appreciation event for October provided complimentary donuts and muffins in the teacher lounge last Monday morning.
- **Student Relations:** Svetlana St. Ives reported that the committee has divided up and each attended at least one meeting of the various clubs on campus. Each invited club members to also attend the council meeting and lend their voice to what is happening at school. They will continue attendance.
- **Elections and Policy:** Tristin Worthers reported that her committee has been reviewing the council bylaws and there are minor modifications that need to be made to correct or update them. The committee is compiling the new bylaws recommendation and will submit for discussion/voting next month.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- **Thanksgiving Can Drive evaluation:** Justin Taylor handed out the results of the evaluations of the Thanksgiving Can Drive from students, faculty, and those that received the donations. All were very positive. There were some excellent recommendations that will be considered when planning for next year.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Calendar of events change:** Mary Todd recommended that the January council meeting date be changed because of a conflict with two other school events. The current date is set for January 15. Change has been approved by our adviser.
 - **Motion:** Move to change meeting date from Jan. 15 to Jan. 18.
 - **Motion by:** Kim Todd
 - **Seconded by:** Jane Sonagle
 - **Discussion:** There are away basketball games that day, but members playing should be able to attend at least half the meeting.
 - **Vote count:** YEA 35, NAY 6, Abstain 2, Motion: Passes

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Upcoming events, projects, and calendar:** Mary Todd read the November calendar of events and projects.

Adjournment time: 3:55 p.m.

Next meeting set for: Dec 16

Other Forms That Student Councils Use

Examples of other forms student councils often create and use include:

- Representative, homeroom, or class report form
- Advance request for approval of school activity
- Advance request for use of school facilities (usually available from school office)
- Dance planning checklist
- Fundraising checklist
- Application for club charter
- Student activity budget
- Disbursement vouchers to transmit money
- Deposit statement
- Internal accounting forms
- Purchase order (must be signed by principal)
- Receiving slip
- Deposit slip
- Monthly budget statement

Since these forms and the way they are used vary among school systems and schools, sample forms are not included in this book. However, most student councils use them as part of their routine scheduling and financial operations. 🍷

APPENDIX 3

Sample Constitutions and Ceremonies

Build Your Own Constitution

Use this outline as a guide to create your own student council constitution.

CONSTITUTION OF THE _____ SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL

ARTICLE 1

NAME OF THE ORGANIZATION

The name of this organization shall be the (School Name) School Student Council Association.

ARTICLE 2

OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES

(This article states the general aims and objectives of the council and lists any general areas of responsibility.)

The objective and purpose of the student council shall be to:

- a. Provide a democratic form in which students can address those school-related issues that affect their lives.
- b. Maintain a continuous communication channel from students to faculty members and administrators as well as among the students within the school.
- c. Offer a yearlong program of social functions and community involvement projects for students.
- d. Provide leadership training for students in the duties and responsibilities of good citizenship, using

the school environment as the primary training ground.

ARTICLE 3

AUTHORITY OF THE COUNCIL

Section 1

All powers of the student council are delegated to it by the school administration.

Section 2

All actions of the student council are subject to review and possible veto by the adviser and principal.

Section 3

The principal shall appoint a member of the faculty to serve as adviser to manage the student council and oversee its projects.

ARTICLE 4

ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP

(This article outlines general provisions for membership on the council. Separate sections should be used for each office and for representatives, if different criteria are used.)

Section 1

Any registered student is eligible for election to the student council according to election procedures.

Section 2

The council shall consist of one representative from each _____ class and the officers elected by the student body.

Section 3

The election of representatives shall take place the _____ week of the _____ term or semester of school.

Section 4

One gains membership in the student council upon the completion of the nomination procedure as established by the student council and election under the procedures prescribed by the constitution/bylaws.

However, one can be elected to a position in the student council (without fulfilling the nomination procedure) by write-in votes.

Section 5

Any member will be removed if he or she misses three (3) meetings without presenting reasonable justification to the adviser.

Section 6

Upon the creation of a vacancy in the position of _____ representative, the _____ will elect a new representative within two (2) weeks. Upon the creation of a vacancy in the position of president, the vice president shall assume all duties and responsibilities immediately. If both offices are vacated simultaneously, the student council shall open nominations for both offices, first accepting nominations for the office of president from among its present membership and holding an election within the student council, and then following a similar process to fill the position of vice president. All vacancies in elected offices shall be filled by accepting nominations from the student council members to decide upon the person to fill the vacancy. Any vacancies created by members changing positions through this procedure will be filled as stated in these bylaws.

ARTICLE 5

OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

(This article is to name the officers of the council.)

Section 1

The elected officers shall be president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and _____. These officers shall serve on the executive committee. The appointed officers shall be selected by the president, subject to a majority vote of the executive committee.

Section 2

Each _____ class shall be represented by one elected representative.

Section 3

All elected officers and representatives must be selected according to the election rules established in these bylaws.

ARTICLE 6

DUTIES OF OFFICERS AND REPRESENTATIVES

(This article outlines the general responsibilities of each officer.)

Section 1

The president shall:

-
-
-

Section 2

The vice president shall:

-
-
-

Section 3

The secretary shall:

-
-
-

Section 4

The treasurer shall:

-
-
-

Section 5

The representative shall:

-
-
-

ARTICLE 7 ELECTIONS

(The entire procedure for student elections is outlined here. Including time of election, voting procedures, type of ballot and vote needed to elect, and other related guidelines.)

Section 1

Election for officers shall take place in the last ten (10) school days in April or the first ten (10) days in May prior to the school year in which officers are to serve.

Section 2

Elections for 11th- and 12th-grade homeroom representatives shall be held within two (2) weeks after the election of the officers and will be so designed that candidates unsuccessful in the election of officers can run for homeroom representative.

Section 3

The elections shall be under the direction of the elections committee.

ARTICLE 8 MEETINGS

(This article outlines the general provisions for meetings. The details—such as time, place, etc.—can be included in the bylaws or left to the discretion of the adviser and council.)

Section 1

The student council shall meet for business at least once a week during the school year, unless the assembly decides by a two-thirds vote to forego this schedule

for a particular week. Meetings shall be held during one of the regularly scheduled student council periods of each week.

Section 2

Special meetings can be called by the president, the executive committee, the adviser, the principal, or by written request of ten (10) members. The purpose of the meeting shall be stated in the call. Adequate notice is required for a special meeting.

Section 3

All legally elected representatives and officers may vote.

Section 4

A simple majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5

Any member of the student body may attend and participate in discussions, but must have written permission from the teacher whose class is being missed.

ARTICLE 9 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Section 1

The elected officers and the standing committee chairpersons are the voting members of the executive committee. The appointed officers and the adviser are nonvoting members.

Section 2

The executive committee shall meet at least two (2) days prior to the regularly scheduled student council meeting and plan an agenda, which is to be distributed to the members at the meeting.

Section 3

The executive committee shall be subject to the orders of the representative body of the student council, and none of its acts shall conflict with action taken by the council.

Section 4

Special meetings of the executive committee may be called by the president, adviser, or principal or upon written request of any three (3) members. At least one (1) day's notice is required for a special meeting.

Section 5

The executive committee shall carry out all duties assigned to it in these bylaws and by the student council.

ARTICLE 10 COUNCIL COMMITTEES

(The names of all standing/permanent committees are listed here along with the method of appointment, term, and responsibilities. Possible committees could be public relations, publicity, finance, handbook, social, homecoming, service projects, fundraising, assembly, program, awards, etc.)

Section 1

The community service committee shall have the following duties:

-
-
-

Section 2

The social committee shall have the following duties:

-
-
-

Section 3

The elections committee shall submit to the student council recommendations concerning nominations, campaigning, speeches, and balloting at least one month prior to student council school elections. These recommendations must be approved by a simple majority vote of the student council. The elections committee shall then be in charge of handling all aspects of the elections.

Section 4

Unless otherwise directed by the assembly, the minimum and maximum number of members of each

standing committee shall be determined by the executive committee.

Section 5

Membership on any student council committee shall be open to any student of the school student body. Every representative must serve on at least one standing committee.

Section 6

Other committees, standing or special (ad hoc), may be appointed by either the council president or adviser from time to time as necessary to carry on the work of the council.

Section 7

The president shall be an ex officio member of all committees.

ARTICLE 11 PARLIAMENTARY AUTHORITY

The rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised* shall govern the student council in all cases in which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these bylaws and any special rule of order the student council may accept.

ARTICLE 12 AMENDMENTS

- Amendments may be made by any member of the student council.
- Amendments must be submitted in writing during a regular business meeting of the council and must be posted for reading for 30 days.
- A two-thirds vote by the student council membership is required for amendments to pass.
- Amendments that do not pass with a two-thirds vote may not be reconsidered during the same school year.

Here is a sample of a constitution specifically written for middle level schools.

The Constitution of the Anywhere Middle School Student Council Association

ARTICLE 1

NAME AND PURPOSES OF THE ORGANIZATION

Section 1: Name

The name of the student government at Anywhere Middle School shall be the Anywhere Middle School Student Council Association.

Section 2: Purposes and Duties

The purposes and duties of the Anywhere Middle School Student Council shall be to:

1. Promote the general welfare of the school
2. Develop attitudes and practices of good citizenship
3. Take an active role in the improvement plans for the school
4. Foster positive student/faculty relationships
5. Provide a forum for student expression
6. Assist with assemblies and school programs
7. Promote positive attitudes of scholarship through example
8. Provide activities that build school pride in students and faculty members
9. Initiate and execute activities for the betterment of the community

ARTICLE 2

MEMBERSHIP TO THE STUDENT COUNCIL

Section 1: General Membership

All students legally enrolled in Anywhere Middle School as sixth, seventh, or eighth graders shall be considered to have membership in the Student Council Association.

Section 2: Executive Board

The membership of the executive board shall consist of a president, first vice president, second vice president, secretary, historian, and team representatives.

Section 3: Executive Officers

The officers shall, during their terms of office, be in the following grades:

- President: eighth grade
- First vice president: seventh grade
- Second vice president: sixth grade
- Secretary: seventh grade
- Historian: eighth grade

Section 4: Vacancies

When a vacancy on the executive board occurs for any reason during the year, the executive board shall recommend the appointment of a new officer to the council adviser for final approval. If the vacancy is of a team representative, the position shall be filled by the team within two (2) weeks of the date of the vacancy.

Section 5: Ex Officio Membership

Ex officio members shall be nonvoting members of the executive board and shall include any student serving as an officer or board member of a national, state, or district student council organization, or from time to time any student whose exceptional leadership abilities would be of significant benefit to the council. (Such membership will be at the determination of the executive board and with approval by the student council adviser.)

ARTICLE 3

POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS OF THE STUDENT COUNCIL

Section 1: President

The president shall have the following duties:

Preside over all meetings of the executive board, appoint committee chairpersons, coordinate and oversee the making of morning announcements, represent the council at public occasions and conventions, act as the council liaison to the principal and faculty, assist in regular and special assemblies, carry out any other duties as directed by the executive board, attend a leadership workshop prior to October.

Section 2: First Vice President

The first vice president shall have the following duties:

Assume the duties of the president in his/her absence, conduct student council elections under the direction of the council adviser, act as chairperson on committees, assist the secretary to maintain the student council message board, carry out any other duties from time to time as requested by the executive board, attend a leadership workshop by the month of October.

Section 3: Second Vice President

The second vice president shall have the following duties:

Assume the duties of the president and first vice president in their absence, serve as chairperson on committees, carry out any other duties from time to time as requested by the executive board, attend a leadership workshop prior to the month of October.

Section 4: Secretary

The secretary shall have the following duties:

Keep the minutes of all executive board meetings and officers' meetings, provide a written agenda to all executive board members not less than 2 days prior to a scheduled business meeting, assist the council adviser with correspondence, maintain attendance records of meetings and activities, assist the first vice president with the council message board, attend a leadership workshop prior to the month of October.

Section 5: Historian

The historian shall have the following duties:

Maintain a written and photographic record of council activities and projects, collect any letters or other recognitions for archival storage, collect newspaper articles of council activities, provide photos of council activities to media and other organizations for publication, create a scrapbook as the official record of the year's council activities.

Section 6: Representatives

The representatives shall have the following duties:

Shall act as liaisons between the executive board

and the student body, attend all executive board meetings, actively participate on committees, actively participate in activities and projects sponsored by the student council association.

ARTICLE 4

ELECTIONS AND ELIGIBILITY FOR OFFICE

Section 1: Election of the President, First Vice President, and Secretary

Once the representatives have been elected from their teams, the council will hold an organizational meeting. During this time advisers will provide applications to eighth graders for the positions of president and historian; seventh graders for the first vice president and secretary positions. Students will submit applications for the positions for which they wish to campaign.

After the established application period is closed, said students will meet with the newly elected team representatives and present a campaign speech to the group. Following the speeches, ballots will be prepared for the team representatives to cast their votes. After the elections are held, new officers will be announced to the school population. The installation of the new officers will be held within two weeks of the announcement.

Section 2: Election of the Second Vice President

The term of second vice president shall be filled by the third week of January by holding a general election in the sixth grade pursuant to the election process outlined in Article 4, Section 1. The term of the second vice president shall run from the January election until the position is refilled the following January. Upon completion of the term of office, the former second vice president shall remain an ex officio member of the executive board with all the rights and privileges thereof.

Section 3: Election of Team Representatives

The team representatives from all grade levels shall be elected by the end of the first full week of school, on a date set forth by the executive officers.

Section 4: Eligibility for Office Executive Officers

Any student who is legally enrolled as a student at Anywhere Middle School and is in the appropriate grade for the office desired may be considered eligible for candidacy.

Team Representatives

Any student who is legally enrolled as a student at Anywhere Middle School may seek a position as team representative.

ARTICLE 5 MEETINGS

Section 1: Officers' Meetings

Executive officers shall hold a minimum of two meetings per month, during the school year, and which precedes meetings of the whole.

Section 2: Scheduled Meetings

The executive board shall hold a minimum of two bi-monthly meetings with one being for business purposes and another for leadership training.

Section 3: Meeting Calendar

The administration, faculty, and staff of the school shall be furnished with a published calendar that includes the dates of all scheduled, regular meetings of the executive board before the first meeting of the year.

Section 4: Called Meetings

No meeting shall be called without a minimum of two day's notice to the adviser.

ARTICLE 6 ATTENDANCE, ACTIVE STATUS, AND DISMISSAL FROM THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

Section 1: Statement of Justification

Inasmuch as the student council is a service-based organization, and can only properly carry out its projects and activities with a full and active membership, and executive board members are selected by their peers with the expectation of providing opportunities and activities pursuant to the goals as set forth in the

constitution, and with this requiring a commitment to the organization, and to the students and staff of Anywhere Middle School, the following rules of attendance and activeness shall apply to all members of the executive board.

Section 2: Unexcused Absences From Meetings

Any member of the executive board missing two (2) scheduled business meetings without giving prior notice to the council adviser, shall be required to meet with the executive officers and council adviser, and may be recommended for suspension or dismissal from the executive board based upon the outcomes of that meeting. This sections shall be inclusive of scheduled officers meetings as well.

Section 3: Minimum Requirements for Active Membership

To be an active member of the executive board, team representatives and officers shall be expected to:

1. Miss no more than one regularly scheduled meeting without giving prior notice.
2. Serve on two active committees per semester, and not miss more than one scheduled committee meeting without giving prior notice.
3. Team representatives must present a report to the homerooms in each respective team, and provide a written copy of the report to the secretary, verified by the team faculty.
4. Provide service at council-sponsored concession stands or other booths during sports seasons. Members participating on teams will be expected to compensate the time by service on extra committees or as determined by the executive board.
5. Provide service prior to, during, and after school dances sponsored by the student council.
6. Provide service as needed, from time to time, as requested by the faculty or administration.

Section 4: Dismissal From the Executive Board

Dismissal will be considered when infractions are severe or habitual, and other disciplinary measures fail. Student council members may be dismissed from the executive board for any of the following infractions:

1. Violation of school policy that results in any form of suspension (in-school, Saturday school, out-of-school)
2. Failure to attend council-sponsored activities or assist in projects
3. Failure to notify of absences to committee, council, or officer meetings as stated in Article 6, Section 3
4. Failure to maintain minimum grade standards
5. Conduct which is deemed unacceptable and/or upon recommendation of the principal, adviser, or both

Section 5: Due Process in Dismissals

Any student who is considered for dismissal will meet with the student council adviser and principal for the purpose of hearing the reasons for dismissal and to present a defense. Dismissal, probation, or dismissal of charges will then be determined. Students dismissed will not be eligible to hold office on the executive board the following school year.

**ARTICLE 7
AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to the constitution may be submitted by any executive board member during a regular business meeting. Consideration of the amendment is in the following manner:

1. Proposed amendments are submitted to the executive board during a regular business meeting as new business.
2. A written copy of the proposal is given to each team representative, who will review it with their team constituents and teachers.
3. Following the class meetings, a two-thirds majority vote of the student body will be required for passage and adoption of the amendment.

**ARTICLE 8
SOURCES OF POWER AND VETO**

Section 1: Source of Power

The power of the student council association is derived from the administration of Anywhere Middle School. The principal shall have the right to permit or deny any action, activity, or project of the student

council association when such action, activity, or project is not in the best interest or reflective of the educational mission of the school environment and/or students.

Section 2: Veto Power of the Adviser

The student council adviser, acting as a designee of the principal, shall have the right to veto any action, activity, or project of the executive board when such action, activity, or project is not in the best interest or reflective of the educational mission of the school environment and/or students.

The Constitution of _____
is hereby ratified on this, _____ the ____ day of ____.
Principal of School: _____
Student Council Adviser: _____
Student Council President: _____

Sample Student Council Ceremony: Installation of Officers

The following is a sample outline used by a school to install its student council officers. Consider the following tips and outline to plan memorable installation ceremonies at your own school.

TIPS FOR OFFICER INSTALLATIONS

Involve the Student Body

- Have the installation at a schoolwide assembly.
- Televisе the installation live in classrooms.

Invite Parents and Faculty Members

- Make sure to send invitations to the parents and teachers of all students to be installed and current officers actively involved with the ceremony.
- Host a reception immediately following the installation for parents, faculty members, and administrators.

Involve the Entire Student Council

- Have all members present and on stage as a display of the unity that is present in the student council.
- Selected council members may be given assignments such as escorting guests to their seats.

Use Symbolism to Emphasize the Importance of Student Council

- The torch (light of leadership)
 - Candles in different colors (in school colors signifying current and new members)
 - The gavel (tool of leadership)
- Explain all symbols used as part of the ceremony.

Oaths of Office

- Write short, “repeat after me” oaths for each office to be installed.
- Avoid using words like ‘swear’ that may conflict with religious beliefs.

Use Music

- Select entrance and exit songs that connect with leadership.

- Use an appropriate song during the lighting of candles (passing the light of leadership).

SAMPLE INSTALLATION CEREMONY

Setup:

- Podium with a table in front for the candles
- White tapers for each representative member of the student council
- Red tapers (in table holders) for each current officer
- White tapers (in table holders) for each new officer
- One large white candle symbolizing the student council association and student body
- Certificates for every council member
- Row of chairs behind podium (officers seated in middle, presidents side by side, and representatives evenly split by grade on each side).

I. Procession and Welcome

- Students gather in gym and are seated.
- VP introduces the adviser to give welcome and go over the purpose and symbolism of the induction of officers.
- Adviser asks that all stand and welcome their student council, who process into the gym from each end of the bleachers (appropriate instrumental music is played).

II. VP Leads the Pledge of Allegiance

III. Presentation of Certificates

Secretary calls representatives to receive their certificates from the president (by grade level, beginning with lowest grade). Officers are called last.

IV. Oaths of Office

The oaths are given beginning with the lower offices and the president going last.

- a. Current officer goes to the podium, retrieves his/her red candle and calls officer-elect to join him/her.
- b. The first officer-elect picks up the outermost white candle in the line and recites the oath of office given by the outgoing officer.
- c. At the end of the oath, the red candle is tilted to

light the white one, then the red one is extinguished and both are replaced on the table in their original positions.

- d. After the president-elect has taken the oath, he or she gives an installation address to the assembly.

V. Passing the Light of Leadership

- a. After the speech, the president-elect picks up his or her candle. This is the cue for the council members to stand, holding their candles.
- b. The president-elect lights the VP's candle first, then proceeds to light the past president's. They in turn light the candles of the student council association members to their sides and so on until the light of leadership has been passed to all members. (Song playing: Randy Travis' "Point of Light" or another similar song).
- c. Adviser goes to the podium and presents to the assembly the student council again and the officers for the coming year.
- d. The council members recess from gym after which the assembly is dismissed. 🔥

Note: Following the installation, parents, available faculty, and council members are guests of a short reception in the media center or cafeteria. Press photos are also taken of the new officers during this time and a release provided within two days. (Local press is always invited one week prior to the installation ceremony.)

APPENDIX 4

Project Ideas

Your best resource for discovering projects is the National Student Project Database, a robust repository of thousands of tried-and-true projects undertaken by NatStuCo councils and chapters of the National Honor Societies.

Many entries include forms or flyers the submitting council or chapter used in executing its project.

Entries can be sorted and filtered based on a number of criteria, including project category (spirit activity, community service, fundraising, etc.), location, and project scope.

Advisers must log in to the database to access all of the content for each entry.

Advisers are also invited to submit their own successfully completed projects to help peers worldwide.

If you're looking to originate your own idea, you may wish to browse the following list of suggested projects and activity ideas. They are grouped into the primary focus areas of NatStuCo: student voice, civic engagement, service, and activities for all. See Chapter 11 for guidelines on project planning.

STUDENT VOICE

To provide opportunities for student input and opinion:

- RSVP
- Plan a panel discussion on current topics of student interest
- Survey or poll students on a regular basis to let them share their opinions and ideas
- Encourage non-council members to attend meetings and share their ideas
- Ask to serve on student council committees
- Have council officers visit classes to discuss topics

with students

- Sponsor student forums
- Establish a regular schedule of student/administrator dialogues
- Provide the principal with copies of minutes after each meeting
- Maintain a suggestion box

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

To provide civic-based experiences:

- Consider student representation on the board
- Encourage council members to attend at least one board meeting
- Make presentations before the board
- Visit local voters to encourage them to vote in school board elections
- Hold mock national political conventions
- Secure voting machines for school elections
- Work to establish a leadership class with school credit
- Invite local government and civic officials to speak
- Present programs about student council to local clubs and organizations
- Serve on policy development committees

SERVICE

To provide volunteer opportunities:

- Volunteer at elementary schools, day care centers, nursery schools, or orphanages in your district
- Participate in a Toys-for-Tots campaign
- Volunteer in district special education classrooms
- Work at animal shelters
- Cooperate with civic clubs on community

improvement projects

- Sponsor a college information day
- Sponsor a career day
- Help an elementary or junior high school organize a student council, run a meeting, or hold a workshop
- Collect supplies for an underequipped school
- Organize hall guides for parent and community nights

ACTIVITIES FOR ALL

To engage different and diverse student, school, and community populations:

Alumni

- Arrange hospitality for alumni at homecoming
- Plant a tree on campus to honor a distinguished alumnus

Appreciation

- Adopt a teacher (can be in conjunction with a holiday)
- Write biographies of faculty members or administrators and publish them in a newsletter or on a website

Assemblies

- Present motivational speakers or trainers
- Devise a system to evaluate assemblies
- Assume full responsibility for the entire assembly program

Athletics

For interscholastic sports teams

- Have a homeroom or class competition for attendance at games
- Hold school color days before important games

For cheerleaders

- Organize a special cheering section for games
- Work with cheerleaders to put on pep rallies

Intramurals

- Hold a Wacky Olympics (nonathletic, fun events)
- Plan activities for students with special needs

Student Attitudes

- Offer an “unsung hero” award to a person who contributes to the school atmosphere but receives little credit
- Hold Acts of Kindness Days

Awards, Honors, and Scholarships

- Set up a permanent plaque to honor outstanding student council members
- Start a school hall of fame

Board of Education

- Invite board members to student council meetings
- Host a school board meeting on campus

Career Development

- Arrange for representatives from various vocations to speak with students
- Sponsor an academic pep rally

Contests

- Hold a competition between classes for various charity drives
- Have school-spirit contests

Educational

- Work to set up an accredited leadership class
- Offer activities to enhance the curriculum or offer programs to serve student interests that fall outside traditional courses

Fundraising

- Sponsor rummage sales, prom dress sales, garage sales
- Coordinate various “zany” contests: head standing, pie eating, sit-ups, kiss the pig, etc.
- Sponsor a craft show
- Stage a talent night

Holidays and Cultural Awareness

- Schedule speakers from other cultures to make presentations about their country’s celebrations
- Sponsor an International Day with foreign language department

- Have an all-school holiday dinner

Student Relations and Services

- Adopt a plan to discourage and eliminate freshman hazing
- Regularly report student council news to the student body
- Set up a plan of student tutoring in study halls

Faculty Relations

- Sponsor teacher-appreciation days
- Sponsor student/faculty athletic events
- Invite teachers to council meetings
- Host a reception for teachers and advisers
- Welcome new teachers in the fall
- Sponsor your student council adviser's attendance to professional development event such as LEAD or National Student Council Conference

Building Relationships With Other Schools

- Organize and/or participate in local, district, state, and national student council events
- Plan an exchange day or week between local schools
- Form an area student council with neighboring schools or those in your district

International Relations

- Invite foreign students and other foreign members of the community to talk about their countries
- Observe United Nations Week in October
- Have international food days and dinners

Leadership

- Have upcoming or returning officers and members attend LEAD conferences and the National Student Council Conference
- Hold local retreats for student officers
- Sponsor leadership training sessions open to all students
- Conduct a school leadership workshop for council and club officers during the first week of school
- Organize an interclub council
- Design an onboarding program for newly elected representatives

Welcoming New Students

- Hold orientation week activities
- Visit feeder schools and answer questions
- Make a video of a typical week at school and show it to new students
- Ask each club to send a representative to a meeting of new students
- Award each new student a certificate of membership in the student body

Parent/Student Relations

- Ask parents to chaperone activities
- Send thank-you notes to parents who help on projects
- Include student council news in parent newsletters

Social/Spirit Activities

- Silly contests
- Homecoming activities
- Holiday-themed activities
- Dance classes
- Dress-up day
- Dances and proms
- Yearbook signing party

Student Council Publications

Suggested items that student councils can produce electronically or in print to keep students and faculty informed:

- Monthly activities calendar
- Column in school paper
- Election rules
- Student body constitution
- Voters' guide
- Student council meeting minutes
- Council newsletter 📧

CONNECT WITH NATIONAL STUDENT COUNCIL

Web: www.NatStuCo.org

Social Media:

Facebook: [/NatStuCo](https://www.facebook.com/NatStuCo)

Twitter: [@NatStuCo](https://twitter.com/NatStuCo)

Instagram: [@NatStuCo](https://www.instagram.com/NatStuCo)

Pinterest: [@NatStuCo](https://www.pinterest.com/NatStuCo)

Email:

Membership information and questions: membership@NatStuCo.org

General information and policy questions: NatStuCo@NatStuCo.org

Mail:

National Student Council

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Reston, VA 20191-1537

Phone: 703-860-0200

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Sales: To order NatStuCo products, go online to NatStuCo.org/store or call the Sales Office at 866-647-7253.





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Product # 6200702