

## **BUILDING A CONSTITUTION**



A student council constitution is a written document 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. A primary quality of a constitution is that it is written in a concise manner. In simple terms, it clarifies and explains the fundamental purposes of the student council. A constitution also sets forth a basic framework for the council's processes, including its membership, meetings, officers, and legislation. It usually includes a historical perspective of the council such as when it was founded.

By including only the basic elements of the student council governance structure, a constitution should rarely need to be revised, but in the event that it is, the process for amending the constitution should be included in the document and incorporate accepted practices. Absent of the elements found in bylaws, a constitution is rarely more than two pages in length.

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. On the following page is an outline of the fundamental provisions that can be incorporated into a student council constitution.

## **Article I**

Name of your student council and any affiliations it has with state and national groups  
*The name of this organization shall be the \_\_\_\_\_ Student Council.*

## **Article II**

The purpose or purposes of the student council  
*The purpose of this organization shall be to ...*

## **Article III**

Membership - Identifies who are the members, and the grades and organizations they represent.  
Non-discrimination statements should also be included in this section.

*All students legally enrolled in John Doe High School shall be considered to have membership in the Student Council Association.*

## **Article IV**

Officers - Identifies the officer positions, eligible grades for holding office, and establishes the time and process for elections.

*The membership of the Executive Board shall consist of a President, First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, Historian, and Team Representatives. Each officer must be an upper-classman during his/her term of service.*

## **Article V**

Adviser - Defines the position and how appointed

*The student council adviser is appointed by the principal, and acting as a designee of the principal, is empowered to manage council activities, oversee the council budget, provide leadership training...*

## **Article VI**

Meetings - Sets the frequency of meetings and defines special meetings. This article also tells how meetings are called.

*Regular meetings shall be held at least twice every school month in a designated room. In case of bad, weather or emergency, the president shall have the authority to cancel a meeting. All regular meetings shall be open to the student body. A meeting may be called by the president or two-thirds of the Council. No special meeting may be called without prior notification of the adviser.*

## **Article VII**

Quorum - Sets forth the number of members required to conduct business. A quorum can be stated as a fraction of the number of members, such as 3/4 or 2/3, or it can be a set minimum number.

## **Article VIII**

Legislation - The legislation article defines how ideas are presented to the student council and move through a process to become an activity or project

## **Articles IX**

Amendments - Explains how the constitution is amended, including notice required, voting procedures, and the majority needed for passage.

*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...*

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

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. Once all editing is completed and copies made, the final draft should be presented to the school for a vote of acceptance.