

A DOZEN STEPS TO BEING A NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EXCELLENCE HIGH SCHOOL

For the past two years the National Association of Student Councils has recognized middle level schools and high schools for achieving excellence in their organizational structure, participation, and achievement on projects and programs. The "Councils of Excellence" is not simply an award, but more importantly, the criteria to achieve the award provides a structure, focus on goals, and a reporting mechanism that every council can use to improve themselves. PASC is committed to helping all councils in the Commonwealth to take steps to improve their record-keeping, project development, and ability to effectively represent their student body. In the process, many excellence councils will receive recognition and many good councils will move to excellent.

Go to www.nasc.us to download details under each section to achieve excellence. The 23 lettered requirements are used for the National Council of Excellence Award. (*) Represents additional optional activities. 21-26 of these are needed to meet the requirements for the Council of Excellence Award or Gold Award of Excellence. Although this list may seem daunting, take time to review it and you will find that many of the items listed are done by your council already and many more can be implemented this school year without a great deal of difficulty. Keep good records of all your council does and apply for the National Council of Excellence in February.

1. Governance

Constitution and Bylaws: The Student Council should have a written constitution and function according to that constitution.

- A. Student Council has a written constitution
- B. Members all have a copy
- C. Student Council has a structure of leadership that is student-focused
- * The constitution is reviewed by a committee at least once every 3-5 years.

Elections: Student Council holds elections that reflect the democratic process for students to practice civic Engagement

- A. Annual elections reflect democratic process and may include voter registration, campaigning, and balloting
- B. Election rules reviewed with all candidates with each given a written copy.
- C. Election ballots handled in an ethical manner and results are appropriately and professionally announced.
- * Council provides information or host presentations by local election officials related to election activities
- * Council utilizes technology to enhance the voting experience (Contact your County Board of Elections about using voting machines.)
- * Council elections incorporate features found in public elections, such as filing periods, voter precincts, and voter registration.

Meetings: Student Council meets regularly throughout the school year for the purpose of council business.

- A. Student Council meets **at least once each month** and members are provided with a meeting calendar.
- B. Meetings are run in accordance with standard practices (agenda, minutes, established rules of order).
- * The leadership of the Council meets to discuss council business and prepare for the general meetings
- * Officers and advisors meet before scheduled meetings to plan an agenda and publish it for members prior to the meeting. (Ex: Agendas could be sent by email to members in advance)

2. Service

Participation in Service: Student Council plans and sponsors service activities that benefit the school and community.

- A. Student Council hosts a minimum of **one service activity each semester** that is designed to engage large numbers of the student body.
- B. Student Council sponsors a minimum of **one** service project each year that specifically address a need or provides assistance in the community.

Service (continued)

- * Student Council encourages members of the student body to seek ways to serve others and recognizes those students who log multiple hours of service.
Student Council participates in the President's Volunteer Service Award as a means of recognizing student and faculty volunteers
- * Student Council identifies community resources and leaders as part of their community service projects
- * Student Council seeks support for service projects from community leaders and groups.
- * Service Learning: If your school is involved in "service learning" Council can incorporate the elements of service learning into service projects as a means to intensify and personalize the experience for the participants.

3. General Activities and Operations:

Spirit and Social Activities: Student Council works to improve school climate at the school and increase student enthusiasm and participation in school life.

- A. Student Council plans and implements a minimum of two activities per year to strengthen spirit and promote enthusiasm for school life.
- B. Each year Student Councils sponsors activities that reach out to diverse populations within the student body with the goal of providing activities for all students
- * Council activities encourage positive social behaviors and camaraderie among students that function to improve overall school climate.
- * Council plans and hosts activities to welcome incoming classes of students
- * Council plans and hosts activities to welcome students new to the school.

Council Operations: Student Council operates in responsible ways that demonstrate sound financial and membership record keeping, evaluation practices, and school involvement

- A. Student Council officers and advisors work to prepare an annual written budget and maintain accurate financial records.
- B. Student Council keep records of membership and maintain historical records of its activities
- C. One or more officers and members meet regularly with the school principal or designee to discuss student and school-related issues
- D. At least one student council officers or council representative serves on a site-level committee that has input on decisions affecting the school.
- * The Treasurer regularly reports the financial activities of the council during regular business meetings.
- * The Council maintains records of council membership
- * Council keeps historical records of council activities, personnel, and recognitions
- * Council uses various methods to evaluate and obtain feedback on projects and activities
- * Council maintains membership with district, state, or regional organizations

Fund Raising: Student Council plans and implements projects to raise funds for school related activities and charitable giving.

A. Student Council sponsors a minimum of one fund raising project each year.

- * Council maintains accurate records of money raised and use smart consumer practices to identify reputable organizations and benefactors for its charitable fund raising.
- * Council researches charities to determine which one will receive council support
- * Council maintains a list of charities that they have researched and found to be legitimate and worthy of supporting thorough council service and fund raising

Leadership Training: Student Council provides leadership training opportunities for members and encourages advisors to participate in professional development sessions.

A. Student Council members participate in a minimum of **two** leadership training sessions or programs per year (in house, online, or by attending conferences/workshops).

B. Student Council advisor(s) annually participate in a minimum of **one** professional development program or training session directly related to student council or student leadership

- * Council tracks and records member participation in leadership training

Communications: Student Council communicates regularly with the student body in a variety of ways; and provides opportunities for members to practice and demonstrate their communication skills.

A. Student Council provides regular updates to the student body and faculty.

- * Student Council members annually participate in activities that provide practice in written and oral communication
- * Student Council regularly contributes to school newsletters, newspapers, websites, or other information mediums as a means of sharing their activities and accomplishments with others.

4. Civic Engagement and Student Voice

Civic-Based Activities: Student Council employs various methods that encourage students to be involved in the community and increase awareness of citizenry and activeness.

A. Student Council provides information to the student body that explains the civic connection to select council activities (ex: elections, community service, student issue forums)

- * Student Council participates in activities that involve community leaders and/or agencies
- * Student Council officers attend a minimum of one civic meeting per year (ex: School Board meeting)
- * One or more Student Council officers or other representatives make a minimum of **one** presentation per year to a civic board or committee (school, city, county, etc.)

Student Voice: The Student Council regularly seeks out student opinion and creates opportunities to include students in significant ways on committees and in activities.

A. Student Council provides forums and other activities that provide all members of the student body opportunities to express their views and concerns, and to suggest ideas for activities and improve school climate.

B. Student Council encourages student to be involved in leadership and provides opportunities for interested members of the student body to participate on decision-making or planning committees.

5. Other Council Activities

- * **Local and State Involvement:** Student Council participates in leadership training and events outside of their school to expand and enhance their programs.
- * Delegates representing the Student Council attend local or state sponsored events that provide training that advances their knowledge base and leadership skills.
- * Student Council hosts workshops or other events that involve participation from either local schools or statewide.
- * **Leadership Training:** Student Council participates in regular leadership training or instruction.
- * Student Council regularly provides leadership training for its own members and /or the student body.
- * Student Council provides leadership training to interested clubs, groups or teams in the school and to members of the student body.