

WALDEN ACADEMY STUDENT COUNCIL HANDBOOK

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I. WALDEN ACADEMY STUDENT COUNCIL MOTTO

To be developed by the Walden Academy student council in 2014

II. OUR PURPOSE

Using the democratic system, students will be selected to become officers and representatives of Walden Academy's Student Council. Through Student Council, students will become aware of the democratic system and how it works in elections and in meeting format. Following the elections, being members of the student council will provide our students, grades 4-8, with opportunities to develop and use leadership skills. Student Council is a service organization for its school, community, nation, and world. For this reason, Student Council will be involved in various activities which foster service.

III. GOALS

The following goals will guide students in the Walden Academy Student Council.

1. Provide children with the opportunity to serve their school and community in a leadership role, such as planting trees, recycling, assisting community needs and initiating various drives to improve the environment of the school.
2. Provide students with a working knowledge of our democratic system.
3. Raise money for various academic activities which benefit the entire student body and to raise money for materials that would not otherwise be available.
4. Provide an opportunity for students to have input in the school calendar of activities, in order to create and foster a school climate of enrichment and enjoyment; these activities include such special school spirit days as: twin day, sports day, holiday cheer, etc.
5. Guide students in developing responsibility and "follow-through" skills.

In summary, this is a middle school activity. The election at this level should not be a popularity contest. Friendships are very vulnerable at this age and sensitivities of children are at high levels. We want to support the self-esteem of all children through healthy competition.

Stresses put on children, whether real or imaginary, over-competitiveness, or pressure to run for office do not have a place in our students' lives. Some children do not like running against one another. Some are too shy. The simpler the election, the better!

IV. EXPECTATIONS

Leaders in Student Council are expected to be model citizens. Their behaviors should always reflect "top" Walden Academy standards. Students should do their academic best.

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

1. Candidates must be students who complete all class assignments and homework on time.
2. Candidates must earn report card grades of "A, B, or C" and work/social skills grades of outstanding or satisfactory.

BEHAVIORAL EXPECTATIONS

1. Candidates should be honest, reliable, responsible, and dependable. Regular school attendance is necessary.
2. Candidates must be willing to learn and use leadership qualities.

PRIOR TO THE ELECTIONS, IF BEHAVIOR INFRACTIONS OCCUR, STUDENTS WILL BE DISMISSED FROM THE PRIVILEGE OF RUNNING.

V. ELECTION PROCESS

Note: If candidates fulfill these requirements and are either accepted into the election process or are elected, they are expected to live by and follow Student Council citizenship and behavioral guidelines at all times during this process. If at any time a child seriously, or repeatedly, breaks Student Council or Walden Academy rules and standards, dismissal decisions will be made by staff.

Parents will be informed if a candidate's actions are not appropriate for an officer and parents will be told that the candidate has been or may be eliminated from the campaign. Parents will be advised if the child will be removed from office.

1. Parents will sign an application that outlines academic and behavioral standards for Student Council candidates.
2. Parents will return the signed application indicating that they understand and support election guidelines.

3. Teachers, the Student Council advisor, and the staff will review the applications and check to see if each candidate qualifies academically and behaviorally.

4. Only students who have turned in applications (by the deadline) and who have qualified according to staff reviewed requirements will be able to run for office.

Walden Academy has a Student Council which is made up of elected officers and representatives from grades 5-8. We use the national election model as a guide for elections. While every student candidate is not elected, everyone who tries is considered a winner and will be acknowledged for his/her efforts.

Grades 3-8 will vote. During this process, the students will be informed when and where results will be announced. Staff is honor-bound to keep the results secret, until that time. Calling the office or staff members before results are announced is not to be done. A calendar will be posted which includes the dates of this process.

During campaign week, campaigning continues through the date of the speeches.

On election day, speeches are given.

OFFICES

The officers that are elected are:

President: He/she must be a 6th-8th grader. The President will preside over all Student Council meetings, represent the student body at all official school functions, begin many assemblies with pledge of allegiance and introduction of guests, and organize committees.

Vice-President: He/she must be a 5th-8th grader. The VP will assume all the responsibilities of the president in the president's absence and will chair committees as needed.

Secretary: He/she must be a 5th-8th grader and have a good background in language arts. The Secretary must be capable of writing neat and accurate minutes of student council meetings and submit them to the school office within 24 hours of every meeting. He/she will write letters as needed.

Treasurer: He/she must be a 5th-8th grader. He/she must have a good background in math and will help to count money after fundraisers.

Each class, grades 4-8, annually selects two representatives and an alternate to Student Council.

In the third trimester, 3rd graders will be able to vote and students will elect a junior secretary and treasurer to shadow the older officers.

All Officers will take and abide by the oath of office.

All Student Council Officers and Members will attend all Student Council meetings, actively support all Student Council approved activities, set a good example of leadership to all Walden Academy students, and complete all required responsibilities outlined for the position.

Representatives must uphold the same standards as officers.

APPLICATION

A child who intends to participate in Walden Academy elections must, by the stated deadline, sign the application. The application is also signed by the current teacher and the child's parent or guardian.* Each child who is committed to participating in the election process must demonstrate his/her commitment by participating in Student Council election meetings scheduled by the Student Council advisor. Unless an emergency exists, failure to participate in these meetings without a reasonable explanation will be grounds for removal from the election process.

*If the election is held very early in the school year, previous teachers should be consulted.

RULES FOR CAMPAIGNING

Poster Rules - All posters are to be made by students. Parent guidance* may be given.

(*e.g., done by child's hand, no professional jobs, etc.)

1. Two (2) posters per candidate - size should be approximately 36" x 36" (which is standard poster-size) or two banners per candidate - 6-8 feet in length, or 1 poster and 1 banner.
2. Decorations of poster may be made using only pens, crayons, or paint.
3. Hand drawn or actual photographs are allowable.
4. Posters may be removed by staff if deemed inappropriate.
5. Computer banners are allowable.
6. Students are not to campaign in parking lot.
7. Students are only allowed to touch their own campaign posters.

*Note: If signs are left, the candidate must realize that the school has no responsibility. To better ensure the sign will not be tampered with, the candidate can remove it each day. When posting signs, it is the student's responsibility to bring posting materials, such as a staple gun, tacks, etc.

In order to encourage students to vote for the true qualifications of the candidate, the following rules include:

1. No candy, cookies or gum are to be given out - nothing to be eaten or chewed!
2. Hand-made, artsy-craftsy items are allowable. If artsy-craftsy items are made, they should be made by the student using paper, yarn, glue and simple art materials and have no tangible value, i.e. won't be used after the election. This material should only have value or meaning during the election process.

3. No commercial items are to be bought to distribute to other students.
4. All items distributed are the candidate's responsibility to clean up.
5. Pens or sharp objects (except safety pins) should not be used.
6. No telephone, fax, or e-mail campaigning.

MEET THE CANDIDATES

In order to introduce each candidate, there will be an assembly for all voters. At this assembly, speeches (3-5 minutes in length) will be given. Voting will be held immediately following this assembly. Any candidate who does not follow the simple guidelines of the assembly will be disqualified from candidacy to provide a fair and equitable forum for all candidates who follow the rules. This will hold true for anyone not adhering to the campaign rules.

OATH OF OFFICE

Students who become Student Council officers take an oath of office. It is signed by both the student and parent and must be adhered to. It is as follows:

As an officer of Walden Academy's Student Council, I will keep my grades within what my teacher feels are satisfactory, and my behavior will be honorable at all times. Should my grades or behavior fall seriously below what is expected of an officer of the Student Council, a conference will be held with the child and the child's teacher. I understand that in this situation I may be asked to resign immediately from the office that I hold. Should my behavior or grades be such that my teacher, the advisor and the principal think that my holding office is no longer beneficial for the school or for myself, I understand that I will be asked to resign from office and will accept that resignation for the good of the school.

ELIGIBILITY TO RUN FOR FUTURE OFFICE

Students who are elected to as Student Council Officers will be eligible to run for office two years after they have served. For example, a 5th grader who is elected as Treasurer will be eligible to run for office again as a 7th grader. Our goal is to have as many students experience a leadership position as possible.