

MIDDLETON HIGH SCHOOL

**SENATE
BY-LAWS**

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MIDDLETON HIGH SCHOOL SENATE

I. MISSION

Middleton High School is a learning community that fosters intellectual growth and habits of commitment, reflection, wellness, and wonderment, developing citizens who make a living, a life, and a difference.

II. BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe that...

...our focus is students and the work they do.

...students should be self-managing learners.

...each student needs to develop the capacity to think and reason

...all students should be challenged intellectually.

...every student can and will learn if presented with the right opportunity to do so.

...goals and expectations should apply to all students, but the means to these goals will vary.

...program design should be shaped by the outcomes that students need.

...the tone of our school should explicitly stress the values of integrity, trust, and decency.

...family and community participation and support are essential.

...each individual must accept personal and community responsibility.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MODEL

The primary focus of Senate is the needs of our students. The following organizational model is designed to include avenues of communication for all stakeholders and interested parties (staff, students, parents, and community members) and provides a process for continual improvement. The model is based on the principles that participation by all affected stakeholders is necessary for ownership and that school improvement requires responsibility, accountability, and commitment to common goals.

IV. OVERVIEW

The Senate is to promote the Mission and Belief Statements by monitoring the school improvement goals, facilitating PET initiatives, coordinating communication between the stake holders and being the decision making group concerning issues of school climate.

Its composition of representatives from the student body, parents, faculty, non-teaching staff and administration provides the opportunity for all members of this school community to express their views and play a role in shaping the policies of the school. This is a policy-making body with the expectation that school professionals will make decisions and implement policy in the spirit of the guiding principles developed by Senate. Once a policy decision has been reached on an issue, the Senate's role then shifts to monitoring for compliance with those decisions.

V. MEMBERSHIP MAKE UP OF SENATE

The Senate shall consist of nine (9) faculty members, one (1) administrator, four (4) parents, two (2) support staff and four (4) students.

MEA may be represented by either a voting or non-voting member.

VI. SENATE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Members of the Middleton High School Senate accept the following responsibilities:

- To be prepared and on time for meetings.
- To follow through on commitments.
- To value differences of opinion.
- To demonstrate cooperative listening skills, refraining from interruptions and side conversations
- To use discretion in outside discussions.
- To be supportive of Senate both inside and outside of meetings.
- To communicate deadlines and calendar information to P.E.T. stakeholders.
- To abide by the Senate ground rules.
- Faculty Senators could be assigned one or more P.E.T. committees to monitor throughout their term so that Senate may be kept abreast of the P.E.T activities. Senator will procure monthly P.E.T. updates and pass them onto the principal's secretary for distribution to Senate and staff.
- Senators shall communicate with their constituents at minimum once a week drawing attention to pertinent senate issues.
- Senators shall serve on at least one senate committee.
- Senators are responsible for determining what constitutes a Senate agenda issue.

VII. SENATE POSITIONS

The Senate will have a Chairperson, a Facilitator, and a Recorder. The responsibilities for each of the positions are as follows. The Chairperson and Facilitator are elected for a one-year term at the last meeting of the previous year and must be held by continuing Senate members only. If the Recorder is a Senate member, this position is elected for one year.

Senate Chairperson Responsibilities

The Chairperson of the Middleton High School Senate accepts the following Responsibilities:

- To recognize visitors attending meetings.
- To run the meeting, including focusing on the agenda, solving problems, enabling win-win solutions, and encouraging participation of all members.
- To review the previous meeting's minutes at the start of each meeting.
- To update Senate members with any history of long-standing issues.
- To assist and coordinate with the recorder during the meeting to ensure clarity of minutes.
- To clarify the problem/issue and the solution(s) being proposed.
- To oversee the group's use of the "Progressive Decision Making Process."
- To remain neutral or temporarily defer responsibilities to the facilitator during the discussion.
- To keep track of committee membership.
- In the absence of the Facilitator, the Chairperson will take on the role.
- In the absence of the Recorder, to designate a substitute.

Senate Recorder Responsibilities

The Recorder of the Middleton High School Senate accepts the following responsibilities:

- To take minutes of Senate meetings, summarizing discussion points and decisions.
- Minutes should include attendees, absentees, guests, and the names of current Senate office holders, as well as the next meeting date and agenda on Senate Meeting Minute forms.
- To publish, summarize, and distribute (in print and via electronic communication) the minutes of Senate meetings at least one (1) school day in advance of the next meeting.
- To communicate and coordinate with the chairperson.

It is recommended that the Recorder is a non-member of the Senate if possible, and that the task remain in one person's hands for the entire school year to ensure consistency.

Senate Facilitator Responsibilities

The Senate Facilitator of the Middleton High School Senate accepts the following responsibilities:

- To arrange and print the agenda prior to all Senate meetings, preferably published in the school bulletin on Mondays.
- To act as the contact person for every agenda item.
- To allot time for each agenda item and designate each agenda item's originator and purpose: information, discussion, or decision.
- To make modifications during the meeting in order to adhere to time constraints.
- To list pending agenda items and set the next meeting's agenda in the last five (5) minutes of each Senate meeting.
- In the absence of the Chairperson, the Facilitator will serve that role.
- To determine the need and desire for a Thursday meeting.
- To maintain a binder containing all periodic reviews.

VIII. SENATE MEETING PROCEDURES

Senate meets for forty-five minutes on Tuesday mornings before school throughout the school year. Senate consensus determines if a second meeting in the week is necessary. In the case of a second meeting, it is held Thursday morning at the same time.

Meetings are open to any and all interested individuals.

Visitors will have a total of five (5) minutes to address any agenda item prior to discussion by the Senate. The Facilitator has the flexibility to adjust this rule at his/her discretion.

A Senate meeting shall proceed as follows:

- 1) Call to order by Chair.
- 2) Recognition of visitors by Chair.
- 3) Review of the minutes of the previous meeting.
- 4) Information/Concerns/Updates from Constituencies
 - a) Time is allotted for the four groups in the following order: Parents, Students, Faculty/Staff, and Principal.
 - b) Time for reports shall be kept to five (5) minutes. The Facilitator has the flexibility to adjust this rule at his/her discretion.
 - c) Items introduced during this time are designated by Senate consensus in one of the following categories:
 1. Informational items
 2. Non-Senate issue, as defined under "Identification of Senate Issues"
 3. Item for Immediate discussion
 4. Future agenda item
 5. Item assigned to sub-committee or routed into the Initiative Pathway
 - d) If a topic is approved for the agenda, a Senator is appointed, either through volunteering or Chair assignment, to shepherd the issue. This Senator is responsible for gathering the correct information needed for the future discussion, as directed by the Senate. The Senate Recorder will maintain a list of agenda items and the corresponding Responsible Senators. The weekly agenda will list the Responsible Senator after the item.
- 5) Adjustment of Agenda order (by Senate consensus)
- 6) Discussion and Decisions regarding Agenda Items
- 7) Present any End-of-the-Month Reviews or PET reviews.
- 8) Determination of the necessity of a second meeting for the week. A Thursday meeting would only contain agenda items left from the Tuesday meeting or special discussion items rather than new items.
- 9) Set agenda for next meeting.

IX. IDENTIFICATION OF SENATE ISSUES

Any concern may be brought to the Senate. The Senate will then determine if it constitutes a Senate issue or needs to be redirected to an appropriate constituent group.

Appropriate Senate issues meet the following criteria:

- Those concerns that impact school climate. School climate includes, but is not limited to, annual school improvement goals and PET initiatives.
- Concerns where the resolution influences other constituent groups.
- Senate has a realistic opportunity to develop a policy or action to address and resolve the concern.
- Issues of school budget, but only as they pertain to school climate (i.e. budget cut priorities).

Issues that will be dealt with by other decision-making bodies include:

- Distribution of district financial resources to individual departments.
- Personnel matters including, but not limited to, hiring decisions, performance evaluations and staffing decisions.
- Pedagogical decisions for individual instructors such as course content, textbook selection, student grading or evaluation, or individual classroom policies or procedures.
- Issues that transcend the MHS community. The Senate, may, however, articulate the position of the high school in the form of a non-binding resolution or appoint MHS staff to serve as liaisons to resolve the issue.

If a decision is made outside the Senate Initiative Pathway process, a Senate stakeholder may question it before the Senate. The Senate will then review, uphold, amend, alter, or reverse that decision in a manner consistent with the procedures laid out in this document. The initial decision in question would remain in effect during this process.

X. PROGRESSIVE DECISION MAKING PROCESS

The Senate makes decisions using a consensus model. A quorum of two-thirds of the current membership must be present to make consensus decisions.

Level 1 Basic Consensus

- A. Presentation of Problem/Issue (P/I)
- B. Precise written statement of P/I
- C. Discussion and debate on the issue.
 - a. Discussion will include the impact on the MEA contract and BOE policy. If necessary, MEA or BOE will present a written impact statement.
- D. Precise written statement of potential solution(s).
- E. Consensus of the group. CLOSURE.

If Level 1 fails to reach group consensus...

Level 2 Formal Consensus Techniques

- A. Identify members' positions by:
 - a. Round 1: Express your strongest concern/opinion
 - b. Round 2: State what you can live with
- B. Using this information, the group modifies and discusses other solutions or strategies.
- C. If necessary, the MEA or BOE will present a written impact statement.
- D. The recorder will generate a precise written statement of potential solution(s).
- E. Consensus of the group. CLOSURE.

If Level 2 fails to reach group consensus...

Level 3 Formation of Problem-Solving Team (P/S Team)

- A. A subset of the Senate consisting of the two (2) members whose positions are the most polar and other volunteers is commissioned to leave the group and prepare a proposal that the whole Senate will be able to accept.
- B. The P/S Team presents the possible solutions and options to the Senate.
- C. Senate discussion of solutions/strategies.
- D. The recorder will generate a precise written statement of potential solution(s).
- E. Consensus of the group. CLOSURE.

If Level 3 fails to reach group consensus...

Level 4 Impasse Rules

- A. Senate Chairperson decides that Senate is at an impasse.
- B. An exact written statement of the solution/strategy would be presented.
- C. The issue is put to a vote. Two-thirds (2/3) of the Senate membership must vote in the affirmative to pass an initiative.

XI. SENATE GROUND RULES

Senate-related issues are handled in a procedure consistent with those found in the “Middleton High School Initiative Pathway” (see Appendix A). Included in this are any changes made to this document.

The Initiative Pathway is available to all members of the MHS Community. Anyone wishing to present a proposal should follow the following procedure:

Process For The Initiative Pathway

1. Contact any Senator to share your idea or project.
2. The Senator will give to you the first page of the “Middleton High School Initiative Pathway.”
3. Contact the Senate Facilitator in order to be put on the agenda for a review of your initiative.
4. Complete any Senate-directed action on the second page of the “Middleton High School Initiative Pathway.”
5. Return to Senate for a second review and approval or direction as necessary.
6. Present researched, revised, and completed initiative to Senate (if necessary).

Periodic Reviews

Reviews of past work and Senate actions are conducted in order to remind the Senators of their past work and to insure that no past items are left unresolved. The Senator conducting the review is taken on a volunteer basis or assigned by the Chair as necessary. The designated Senator collects past agenda items, either from past agendas or from past reviews, and determines the status of the item (resolved, unresolved, or removed). A summary is created and distributed to the Senate. A monthly review should be distributed at the first meeting of the following month. A yearly review is conducted at the last meeting of the year and reviewed at the first meeting of the following year. The Facilitator maintains an archive of each periodic review.

Dealing with a Senator not Fulfilling Responsibilities

This procedure can be initiated at the request of an interested party or at the discretion of the Principal.

1. The Principal will speak to the Senator in question regarding the issue.
2. If the issue persists, the Principal brings the issue to the Senate for discussion.
3. Senate consensus determines any further action.
4. The Principal enforces any decisions.
5. The Nominating Committee finds a replacement Senator if necessary (see “Election of Senate Members”).

Mid-Term Senate Vacancy

In the event of a mid-term vacancy, the Nominating Committee will announce the opening to that constituency at large and solicit volunteers for appointment. In the case of more than one willing candidate, an election is held. The replacement completes the remainder of the outgoing Senator’s term or completes the specified period of leave.

PET Monitoring

Each PET is assigned a faculty Senator liaison. This liaison is responsible for providing a written monthly update to the Principal's secretary for publication and distribution to the Senate. This update should include PET members in attendance and a record of the group's activities and progress. A full description of PETs can be found in Appendix B, "Middleton High School Project Exploration Team Guidelines."

Appeals of Senate Decisions

The Senate is the appropriate body to request a change in existing school policy or reconsideration of past Senate decisions. Further grievances may be appealed to the Superintendent of Schools or ultimately to the Board of Education where the principal or designee would present the Senate position. If there is a question on implementation of policy or administrative enforcement thereof, the Senate will form a sub-group to meet with the principal to determine appropriate course of action. Resolution of the question will be shared with the Senate.

XII. ELECTIONS OF SENATE MEMBERS

Faculty and Support Staff

- Establish a Nominating Committee consisting of the Senate chairperson, facilitator and all outgoing faculty and support staff senators. In March the committee would contact and inform the faculty and the support staff about upcoming Senate vacancies.
- Senate elections will take place in April through a printed ballot, with separate ballots for faculty and for support staff. In the event that nominees do not come forward it is the responsibility of the nominating committee to reconfigure the constituency representation.
- New Senators would be encouraged to attend the remaining Senate meetings and would be required to attend two new member orientation meetings that would take place the first two Thursdays in the month of May.
- The Nominating Committee will conduct orientation for new members and each new Senator will be assigned a mentor from the continuing Senators. Orientation will include a review of the by-laws, and Senate ground rules.

Students

- A Student Nominating Committee consisting of existing student Senators and the school council officers will create a ballot of possible Senators.
- The Student Nominating Committee will contact and inform the student body of the upcoming elections during April, and elections will be held in May.
- The term of office shall be for one year, running from September to June.
- New students Senators will be encouraged to attend Senate meetings starting in January with new senator orientation to be held the first Thursday of the second semester.
- It is recommended that a diversity of classes be represented.

Parents

- Parent Senators are elected during the April Parent Connection meeting from parents at large.
- Parents are elected for a two-year term, with terms staggered to maintain continuity.
- New parent Senators will follow the same orientation as the new faculty and support staff Senators.