The Election Process

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All qualifications, election procedures, candidate guidelines, deadlines/consequences should be in writing and approved by the school principal. All candidates should receive a written copy of the above.

See Election Issues handout...

1 Evaluate your Process

You don't need to reinvent the wheel...but it's not a bad idea to look at the procedures with an objective eye.

- Is there room for improvement?
- Does it give everyone a fair chance at election?
- Are several qualified candidates likely to register to run for every office?
- Are election rules fair and impartial (what does your consitution/bylaws say)?
- Is anything done to encourage the diversity of your student population to run for election?
- What is done to ensure the integrity of the ballot?
- What is done to ensure that qualified students who lose the election are encouraged to stay active in the group?
- Has the principal approved the process? He/she will take the "brunt" of any parents calling to contest an election!

2 Establish a Time line

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Once evaluations have been completed and necessary changes made, establish a time line.

* registering to run
* information meetings
* campaign periods
* voter education
* speeches
* elections
* results

√ •Check that dates don't conflict with major events
•Give ample time for all interested students to obtain information and register to run

PUBLICITY

3 Publicize Upcoming Elections

Begin a publicity campaign to alert interest students that elections are coming.

- PA announcements are generally not enough to ensure quality candidates
- Consider letters to students who have been identified by past officers or faculty members as potential candidates
- Put up fliers, banners, mobiles
- Arrange for announcements at meetings or in classes
- Create commercials to be aired at lunch, before school or at other times

See campaigning handouts...

4 Candidate Registration

Many methods exist for candidate to register to run for office:

* <u>simple sign-ups</u> (non-threatening)
* <u>petitions - good candidate, not pledging a vote</u> (experience "real life" procedure and alerts the student body that elections are coming)
* <u>application</u> (a reflection of experience and goals)

5 Candidate's Workshop

- past officers talk about what it means to be an officer
- what the job entails
- officers with good and bad experiences (helps to "weed out" the glory seekers)
- review constitution/bylaws
- review officer expectations (grade point average, code of conduct pledge, etc.)
- explain in detail the election procedures
- workshops on forming a platform, writing a speech, running a campaign, making effective posters, etc.
- emphasize respect for each other during the entire process (your efforts are appreciated and you are very special)
- all candidates should receive a written copy of all campaign rules, election procedures, voting details, etc.
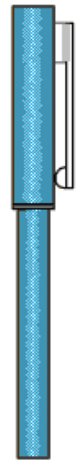
6 The Campaign

Campaign period long enough to give candidate an opportunity to effectively publicize their objectives, but not so long that the election loses focus.

- set a dollar limit on expenditures (keeps opportunity more fair)
- make organization supplies available to all candidates
- central display area ?
- approval on all publicity

7 Voter Education

Drawing attention to the qualities of good officers and the responsibilities they have can help make the election more than a popularity contest.

8 Speeches

- An important part of the election procedure is an opportunity for candidates to present themselves in person (or on video tape).
- Advisor approval on speeches
- Practice Makes Perfect - hold practice sessions (allow candidates to use a microphone to practice or hear themselves on tape)
- Make the setting comfortable (possibly sitting or standing at a podium)

See speech handouts...

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9 Elections

Try to make elections as close as possible to the "real thing."

- voter registration
- voter booths
- monitor the procedures

10 Counting the Ballots

- voting results confidential (keep on file for at least one year)
    Note - be sure candidates know up front that exact counts will not be released!
- have several persons to sign verification of the results (always have at least one adult)

11 The Results

Announcing the results should be done with respect to the feeling of those not elected. Give all candidates the time to take down their campaign signs and to compose themselves before announcing the results to the student body.

- all candidates meet ahead of time
- refer "those who were elected" and "those who were not elected" rather than winners and losers
- consider not publishing final vote tallies (this must be in the election procedures that candidate get ahead of time - explain the rational: lose by a landslide/small margin...doesn't change the outcome and only hurts feelings)
- congratulate each candidate in writing to thank him/her for participating
- encourage or invite those not elected to apply for committees, etc.

12 Evaluation

Remember to evaluate your process. Go back to the questions in stage 1....

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Note: By including a lot of appointed positions, your school can really tap into the qualified student leaders who wish to serve, but do not feel competitive enough to run in an election. If, for example, you have a recording and corresponding secretary, a written task on an application will often yield the most qualified leader. Appointed positions also allows for the appointment of "co" chairperson for an even stronger student government.

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