

# Committees

## The Committee System: The Way To Get Things Done

Just like the real government, committees do the research, investigation, proposals, and planning of events and/or issues.

- The chairperson may be appointed by the president or elected by the student government or sometimes student government members volunteer to serve.
- Committee members may be elected or appointed but should include interested non-student government members.
- The faculty adviser to committees may be chosen by the principal, the president, or the committee itself. Volunteers, however, are the best.
- The committee task must be clearly understood. It is best if it is written out. Deadlines and progress reports should be written out. The amount of authority must be clear.
- Meetings should be held as often as needed. Progress should be reported regularly at student government meetings.

The above was adapted from *The Spirit of the Student Council*, Earl Reum, NASSP 1981

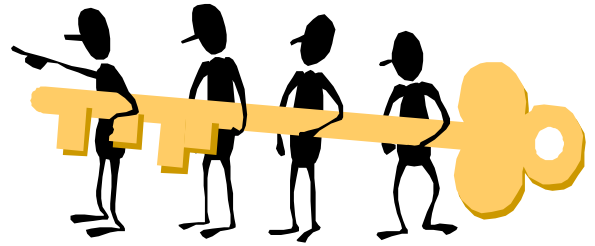
The committee is the cornerstone or key successful organizations. Committee members get satisfaction from their work when they can see results developing from their time and efforts. Most of the actual work of organizations are enacted by and through committees – just look at Congress to see where the nitty-gritty work is done. Effective meetings are planned. Assignments are delegated to committees to be investigated, discussed, and plans of action devised to be reported back to the entire organization. Therefore, the committee action is one of the most important working forces within an organization. The goals or mission of a functioning committee sets the stage for an effective operation. In any group meeting, both time limitations and the size of the group participating necessitates rules of procedure in order to accomplish the business at hand. This limits the extent of individual action and involvement. The committee serves as an excellent opportunity for the development of leadership training. The informality, as well as the fact that only one project or activity is being considered, tends to produce a unity of purpose. Keener insight is developed if all members have a chance to express their views. In the hands of a skilled chairman each member is given a responsibility and therefore becomes an active, involved individual. The success of any student group is contingent upon the nature, extent, and thoroughness of committee action. Committees provide a natural situation for the development of leadership through a democratic environment.



### Principles for Effective Committees:

1. They are the informal work groups of any large body, involving the resources and wisdom of the students in decisions by defining problems, discovering solutions, and communicating these to the larger body.
2. The lifeblood of a continuing program is involvement, and committees provide this opportunity (not all students can serve on elected positions).

3. Committees have value only if their members understand the job to be done, prepare to do it, meet on time, participate fully, and report their best thinking to the entire group.
4. There must be a committee-developed plan of action in terms of organization, schedule, assignment, facilities, self-evaluation, and responsibility.
5. Members must know and understand the extent of their authority as well as responsibility.
6. Students need a voice in decisions about activities of their organization. Members need a chance to formulate ideas in small groups with a flexible agenda. The results achieved by committee work are no better than the work done by committee members. The process calls for thoughtful, responsible effort by individuals.
7. Divergent views must be clearly presented and every member given an opportunity to voice an opinion.
8. Each committee member needs a specific assignment. A sense of being an active part of the committee provides incentive.
9. A permissive environment, where each member is encouraged to participate and is allowed full expression, creates a positive, constructive atmosphere. Self-satisfaction is developed from being understood and accepted and is essential to a feeling of well being. To be able to give and take within a group with a common purpose will help stimulate and motivate accomplishment.



**Most organizations have three kinds of committees in operation:**

1. Executive Committee: This committee coordinates the work of officers and committees by forming an executive or steering committee to direct the overall plans.
2. Standing Committee: This committee usually exists for the duration of a specific term such as the school year. It normally has a continuing task such as membership, finance, program, social, spirit, etc. Generally, a standing committee spelled out in the constitution's bylaws.
3. Special Committee (ad hoc): When there is a specific task to be undertaken, or a special need arises, the chairman appoints a temporary committee to do the job within a time limit. The committee is dissolved when the task is completed.

All committees should be given information concerning their assignments. Usually the secretary keeps a record of the creation of the committee and its assignments as well as its report. Some organizations use a committee assignment form that includes a standard format:

| Committee Assignment       |                 |
|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Assignment:                |                 |
| Chairperson(s):            |                 |
| Members:                   | Date Appointed: |
| Specific Instructions:     |                 |
| Scope of Authority:        |                 |
| Available Resources:       |                 |
| When to report and how:    |                 |
| Deadline for Final Report: |                 |

If a committee is to function successfully, it must have a plan to follow and a structure to see that its task is accomplished. To provide this structure effectively, some groups utilize the organization plan shown below.

| Committee Plan     |            |                    |                         |
|--------------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------------|
| Committee Name:    |            |                    |                         |
| Committee Task:    |            |                    |                         |
| Committee Members: |            |                    |                         |
| Goal               | Objectives | Who is Responsible | Deadline/Accomplishment |
|                    |            |                    |                         |

The information above is adapted from *A Handbook for the Student Activity Adviser*, Ronald Joekel, Office of Student Activities, National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1979