



LOCAL BYLAWS for your NEHS CHAPTER

Some Guidelines for Development

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1. National Bylaws: ARTICLE 14: Local Chapter Bylaws

Section 1. Each chapter shall write bylaws to amplify sections of this National Constitution and to clarify operating procedures of the chapter. Chapter bylaws do not need the approval of the national office but must be consistent with the National Bylaws.

Section 2. The chapter bylaws shall contain information concerning the election and duties of officers, the schedule of meetings, member obligations, dues, chapter activities, and the like. [See the *Sample Bylaws* found in the *NEHS National Handbook* for more information.]

Source: NEHS National Constitution. © 2008 NASSP.

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2. Excerpts from the *NEHS National Handbook*

Chapter Bylaws

Local chapters must develop and adopt bylaws to establish local procedures. These bylaws should specify guidelines on such topics as the schedule of meetings; member obligations regarding meeting attendance, participation in projects, etc.; information on chapter officers (which ones are required, what their duties are, how they are to be elected); dues requirements; a description of projects for the year; and other chapter procedures.

Once the chapter has established its local bylaws, plans for the regular review the bylaws. While the bylaws are not approved by the national office, they must be consistent with the National Constitution and the policies established for all chapters.

Note on terminology: The national office uses the phrase “National Constitution” to refer to the set of national guidelines for all NEHS chapters, reserving the phrase “local bylaws” or “chapter bylaws” for the operating procedures adopted by the local chapter. Some chapters may wish to refer to their local bylaws as a “local constitution” which is allowable

3.a. Sample Bylaws: Introduction and Outline

All NEHS chapters function under the National Constitution (available in the national handbook and on the national Web site), and operate locally under a set of *chapter bylaws*.

Bylaws for local Honor Society chapters are designed to implement and expand upon the National Constitution. Bylaws, by definition, are a written set of rules for a group. Chapter bylaws define the limits of authority for the organization and give a sense of both order and purpose.

Chapter bylaws should be stated in simple, age-appropriate, easy-to-understand terms. They should include only essential items. Amendments should be simple and direct. Bylaws must be studied regularly and changed to stay vital, meaningful, and real.

A Suggested Outline for Honor Society Chapter Bylaws:

- Article 1 Name: Statement of the name of the organization (the name of your local chapter of NEHS)
- Article 2 Purpose(s): The general purpose of the group [See Article I of the National Constitution for reference.]
- Article 3 Powers: Powers vested in the organization; the final authority which rests with the principal (per the National Constitution)
- Article 4 Membership: Eligibility and Selection: Definition of membership categories for the group Establishment of the time, methods, and procedures for the identification of candidates and selection of members. (Information in this section must be consistent with the national guidelines, developed by the Faculty Council, and is not subject to chapter member approval.)
- Article 5 Obligations of Members. The duties and responsibilities of the organization, the officers, adviser, committees and committee chairs, and members. Reference to meeting attendance, project participation, and dues can be included in this section.
- Article 6 Officers: Procedures for election of officers, removal from office, and filling vacancies. *Note:* Officers are not a required feature for NEHS chapters. Because they provide additional leadership experiences for members, their use is encouraged.
- Article 7 Meetings: Frequency of meetings, and provisions for special sessions
- Article 8 Activities: Overview of the regular activities of the chapter including chapter service projects.
- Article 9 Chapter Disciplinary guidelines. [Information in this section must be consistent with the national guidelines, developed by the Faculty Council, and is not subject to chapter member approval.]
- Article 10 Ratification/Review/Amendments: Method and procedure for ratification (formal approval and adoption) of the bylaws and provisions/methods for amending the bylaws

Additional local provisions as developed by the Faculty Council, chapter membership, or school administration can be inserted. It is recommended that the article pertaining to ratification and amendments appear at the end of the bylaws and be followed by two key provisions: 1) the date of approval and 2) signatures of the chapter/school leadership in the year of approval.

The following *Sample Bylaws* provides text for chapters to consider.

3.b. SAMPLE BYLAWS: NATIONAL ELEMENTARY HONOR SOCIETY*

**Note:* While this sample offers provisions that could be essential for each chapter, local chapters should review their own needs, policies, and procedures to amend this model to suit their local needs. Though bylaws are called for in the National Constitution (Article 14), the verbiage found in this sample is not. Underlined phrases indicate parts of the document where local variations are allowed.

Chapter Bylaws

Of the

_____ Chapter,

Charter Number: _____

of the

National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS)

Adopted: [Enter date of most recent approval to verify this as the most recent version.]

ARTICLE 1: NAME

The name of this chapter shall be the _____ Chapter of the National Elementary Honor Society (NEHS) of _____ (name of school). [*Formatting note:* When there is only a single section within an article, it is not necessary to enumerate. Only when multiple sections exist (see Article III below) is it necessary to number the individual sections.]

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter shall be to recognize students for their outstanding academic achievement and demonstrated personal responsibility, to provide meaningful service to the school and community, and to develop essential leadership skills within the students of _____ (name of school).

ARTICLE 3: POWERS

Section 1: This chapter operates under the direction of and in full compliance with the National Constitution of NEHS. See www.nhs.us/constitution.

Section 2. The chapter adviser is given the authority to supervise the administration of chapter activities, as delegated by the school principal.

Section 3: Final authority on all activities and decisions of the chapter resides with the school principal.

Section 4: Non-discrimination. Our chapter of NEHS maintains policies and practices that are designed to prevent discrimination against any qualified candidate or member on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, and disability. This policy of nondiscrimination applies to all activities and practices, including the chapter administration and the selection, discipline, and dismissal of members. [*Note:* Local advisers should confer with the principal and or school system representatives regarding the inclusion of the language from this section to be certain it conforms to existing local and state policies, or, in the case of non-public schools, the governing documents of your institution.]

ARTICLE 4: MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

Section 1. Membership in this chapter is an honor bestowed upon deserving students by the faculty and shall be based on the criteria of Scholarship and Responsibility.

Section 2. Membership in this chapter shall be known as active, honorary, and graduate. Active members become graduate members at upon completion of their elementary school studies at this school. Graduate and honorary members have no voice or vote in chapter affairs.

Section 3. Eligibility:

- a. Candidates eligible for selection to this chapter must be enrolled in grades 4, 5, or 6.
- b. To be eligible for selection to membership in this chapter, the candidate must have been enrolled for a period equivalent to one semester at _____ (*insert school name*).
- c. Candidates eligible for election to the chapter shall have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale. [*Note: While the level of GPA performance can be raised by individual chapters, the standard must still remain as a cumulative GPA. Chapters are discouraged from allowing their GPA standard to change on an annual basis, but are encouraged to maintain and publicize this standard to assist students in setting goals for achieving this level of academic performance.*]
- d. Upon meeting the grade level, enrollment, and GPA standards, candidates shall then be considered based on their demonstrated personal responsibility.

Section 4. The selection of members to this chapter shall be by a majority vote of the Faculty Council which consists of faculty members appointed by the principal. The chapter adviser is a non-voting member of the Faculty Council who facilitates all meetings of the council.

Section 5. Prior to the final selection, the following shall occur:

- a. Students' academic records shall be reviewed to determine scholastic eligibility.
- b. Students who are eligible scholastically (i.e., candidates) shall be notified and asked to complete and submit the Candidate's Form for further consideration. [*Sample forms can be found in the NEHS National Handbook.*]
- c. The faculty shall be requested to evaluate candidates determined to be scholastically eligible using the official evaluation form provided by the chapter adviser. [*Sample forms can be found in the NEHS National Handbook.*]
- d. The Faculty Council shall review the Candidates Forms, faculty evaluations and other relevant information to determine those who fully meet the selection criteria for membership.

Section 6. The selection of active members shall be held once a year during the second semester of the school year. [*Note: Alternative or additional selection periods may be added.*]

Section 7. Candidates become members when inducted at a special ceremony.

Section 8. Transfer membership. Membership can be transferred from one chapter of NEHS to another.

- a. An active member of the National Elementary Honor Society who transfers from this school with an active chapter of NEHS will be given an official letter indicating the status of his/her membership.
- b. An active member of the National Elementary Honor Society who transfers to this school will be automatically accepted for membership in this chapter. The Faculty Council shall grant to the transferring member at least one semester to attain the membership requirements and, thereafter, this member must maintain those requirements for this chapter in order to retain his/her membership.

ARTICLE 5: OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS

Section 1. Each member of this chapter who is in good standing with regard to the membership standards and member obligations shall be entitled to wear the emblem adopted by the National Elementary Honor Society.

Section 2. Annual dues for this chapter shall be _____. [*Note*: Dues cannot exceed \$20 per member per year as noted in the national constitution.] Dues will be payable to the chapter treasurer within 30 days of induction. [*Note2*: Dues are not required as a function of the chapter.]

Section 3. Any member who withdraws, resigns, or is dismissed from the chapter shall return the emblem to the chapter.

[If additional member obligations exist for the local chapter, they should be delineated as additional sections of this article. A full accounting of all member obligations should be in place and can be replicated in Student Handbooks, Candidate packets, or Member Handbooks as needed.]

ARTICLE 6: OFFICERS

Section 1. The officers of the chapter shall be president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer.

Section 2. Student officers shall be elected at the last meeting of each school year. [Alternate times for officer elections can be inserted here.] All returning members are eligible to run for a position as an officer.

Section 3. A majority vote shall be necessary to elect any officer of this chapter. If the first vote does not yield a majority, a second vote shall be taken of the two candidates receiving the highest number of votes.

Section 4. It shall be the duty of the president to preside at the meetings for this chapter.

Section 5. The vice-president shall preside in the absence of the president and shall also keep a record of members' contributions in the areas of leadership and service.

Section 6. The secretary shall keep the minutes of meetings and be responsible for all official correspondence of the chapter.

Section 7. The treasurer shall keep the record of expenses, dues [optional], and all other financial transactions of the chapter

NOTE: If additional or alternative officers or duties exist, their positions and duties of office should be detailed in this Article of the by-laws. Also consider adding components that would describe when officers can be relieved of their duties (suspensions, etc.) in cases not involving dismissal from the chapter.

Section 8. Officers shall serve a term of one year [Alternative: Chapters may define terms as a semester or even a quarter in length to maximize the leadership opportunities for chapter members.]

Section 9. Officers and the faculty adviser(s) shall collectively be known as the chapter's Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall have general charge of the meetings and the business of the chapter, but any action by the Executive Committee is subject to the review of the chapter members.

ARTICLE 7: MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings of this chapter shall be held _____ (e.g., monthly, weekly, etc.).

Section 2. This chapter shall strive to conduct its meetings according to *Robert's Rules of Order.*

ARTICLE 8: ACTIVITIES

Section 1. The chapter shall determine one or more service projects for each year. A minimum total of four (4) official activities will be conducted each year.

Section 2. All members of the chapter shall regularly participate in these projects.

Section 3. These projects shall have the following characteristics: fulfill a need within the school or community, have the support of the administration and the faculty, be appropriate and educationally defensible, and be undertaken in a well-planned and organized manner.

Section 4. The chapter shall publicize and promote its projects in a positive manner.

ARTICLE 9: DISCIPLINE of MEMBERS

Section 1. Any member who falls below the standards of scholarship and responsibility may be considered for disciplinary actions by the _____ [*insert chapter name*] chapter of the National Elementary Honor Society. A member of the National Elementary Honor Society is expected to maintain his/her academic standing, be responsible in all aspects, and take an active role in service and leadership to his/her school and community.

Section 2. If a member's cumulative grade point average falls below the standard in effect when he/she was selected (*fill in the minimum cumulative grade point average for your chapter selection*), he /she will be given a written warning and a reasonable time period for improvement. If the cumulative grade point average remains below standard at the end of the warning period the student will be subject to further disciplinary action by the Faculty Council that can include consideration of dismissal from the chapter.

Section 3. Violations of the law or school regulations can result in immediate consideration of the dismissal of a member (see Section 5 below). These violations include, but are not limited to stealing, destruction of property, cheating, truancy, or other serious offenses defined in the school's student code of conduct.

Section 4. Offenders of the school conduct code (such as use of profanity, unexcused absences, excessive tardiness, etc.) will receive a written warning. A conference may be requested by either party (Faculty Council or student/parent). If the member is involved in additional violations of the school conduct code, the member may be considered for dismissal.

Section 5. In all cases of pending dismissal:

- a. The member will receive written notification from the adviser/Faculty Council indicating the reason for consideration of dismissal.
- b. The member will be given the opportunity to respond to the charge(s) against him/her at a hearing before the Faculty Council. This will take place prior to any vote on dismissal (in accordance with due process identified in the National Constitution). The member has the opportunity to present his/her case either in person or through a written statement presented instead of the face-to-face hearing. Following the hearing, the Faculty Council will vote to determine the appropriate disciplinary action. A majority vote of the Faculty Council is needed to dismiss any member.
- c. The results of the Faculty Council vote will be presented to the principal for review, and then stated in a letter sent to the student and parents. Dismissed members must surrender any membership emblems to the adviser.
- d. The Faculty Council's decision may be appealed to the building principal and afterwards according to provisions of the school district discipline policies.
- e. Members who resign or are dismissed can be reconsidered for membership upon written request to the chapter adviser.

Section 6. In lieu of dismissal, the Faculty Council may impose other appropriate disciplinary measures upon a member.

ARTICLE 10: RATIFICATION, REVIEW, and AMENDMENTS.

Section 1: Ratification. These bylaws will be approved upon receiving a two-thirds [Alt., or other reasonable percentage] affirmative vote of all active members of the chapter, a majority affirmative vote of the Faculty Council, and approval by the administration.

Section 2: Review. These bylaws shall be reviewed and if necessary, revised within five years from the date of approval noted on this document.

Section 3: Amendments. These by-laws may be amended by a 2/3 vote of the chapter, provided notice of the proposed amendment has been given to members at least one month prior to the vote. The exceptions are any provisions regarding selection of members and chapter disciplinary guidelines, which are developed by the Faculty Council with the approval of the principal.

[*Note*: It is recommended that the Ratification and Amendment article always be the last article. Should the chapter wish to insert additional articles above the last article, that is permissible.]

Date: (Indicate approval date for this version)

Signatures/Names of the Chapter President, Secretary, Adviser, and Principal.

4. Additional Resources

A. Creating Chapter Bylaws: A Process. There are three essential steps to take when writing your chapter bylaws: gathering resources, writing the text, and obtaining approval.

Gather resources

- Sample bylaws from the national office (*see below*)
- Bylaws from other chapters in the school district
- Relevant school policies, handbooks, codes of conduct, etc.
- Sample bylaws from other organizations on campus (e.g., student council, clubs, etc.) – helpful for general comparative purposes.

Writing

Determine who will write the bylaws (preferably a committee of faculty or students or a combination of the two) and who will need to review and approve the same, as well as a general planning schedule (suggestions to follow).

Step 1: Organize the first meeting of your Bylaws Committee

Review the purpose of the group and resources collected.

Review the timeline for development, particularly deadline for completion of the task.

Create a first draft or make assignments for drafting sections of the new bylaws.

Set the draft aside for later consideration; plan your next meeting (step 2)

Step 2: Review the first draft.

Suggest and discuss revisions.

Step 3: Share results with the chapter membership and Faculty Council, allowing a finite time for review and comment (up to 30 days). For new chapters where no student members have been selected, input can be sought from the faculty leadership or the total staff.

Step 4: Review comments and suggestions.

Revise the bylaws.

Prepare copy for Approval process.

Repeat Steps 3 and 4 as needed.

Approval

Step 5: If no student members exist, move on to Step 6. Otherwise, submit to Chapter Membership for approval. If approval is not obtained, start over taking into consideration the need for new or alternate members of the committee. For new chapters, with no membership to submit to, this step can certainly be overlooked.

Step 6: If the Faculty Council was your bylaws committee, skip to Step 7. Submit to Faculty Council for approval. If the FC does not approve, they should provide direction to the committee regarding which specific sections they cannot accept and offer suggestions for consideration. In this case, return to Step 4.

Step 7: Submit to the Administration for approval. If the administration does not approve, they should provide direction to the committee regarding which specific sections they cannot accept and offer suggestions for consideration. In this case, return to Step 4.

Step 8: Upon formal approval by all relevant groups, print and distribute the final, ratified version of the Chapter Bylaws for all parties involved.

Bylaws should be reviewed regularly, but no later than once every five years to ensure that they are accurate and up-to-date. See that a final version of the approved text is filed in school files.

4.B. Changing the Bylaws

Once the bylaws have been accepted by a vote of the chapter and approved by the Faculty Council and the administration, they become the 'law' or guiding principles of the chapter. Generally, it will be necessary to change the bylaws only occasionally, due in large part to their specificity and detail.

When it becomes necessary to consider changing your bylaws, turn first to the existing text. Every set of bylaws should include a description of the procedures for amending the articles. To begin the review, a Bylaws Revision Committee can be set up by the principal or adviser.

After changes have been proposed and a draft has been prepared, the members of the chapter should be informed and given copies so that they can review and discuss the issues before they come to a final vote. Proposed amendments or revisions most commonly require a two-thirds vote of the chapter for adoption. NOTE: Sections dealing with revisions to the procedures for selection and disciplining of members can be changed only by the Faculty Council, though input from the chapter is allowed and encouraged.

Some chapters are criticized for spending too much time on amending their bylaws instead of dealing with other chapter concerns. However, in the future there may come times when an outdated set of bylaws is a real hindrance to the chapter. Some good reasons for amending bylaws are:

- statements no longer suit the chapter or school situation
- bylaws are arranged so poorly that essential information is hard to find (this situation sometimes occurs when an old document has been added to and amended over a period of years).
- bylaws contain elements that have caused long-standing disagreement or have been regularly misinterpreted or misunderstood by chapter members, staff, parents, etc.
- bylaws are found to violate individual rights or local/state policies
- bylaws prevent the chapter from adapting to change.

It is important that each time the bylaws are reviewed or changed, that the date of approval be updated and included on the new document. Old, now outdated copies should be destroyed except for those kept on file for historical purposes.

4.C. Other Chapter Records

Each chapter should have on file and available for review the following:

- The *NEHS National Handbook* including the National Constitution
- Local selection procedure description including all forms used in the selection process and lists of member obligations once selected
- Policies and procedures relating to the disciplining of members
- Chapter bylaws
- Chapter membership lists (both present and past).

In addition, it is recommended that chapter files also contain the following:

- A copy of the charter of the chapter (in addition to the version hung on the wall!)
- A history of the chapter (founding date, charter number, explanation of the chapter name – if any, names of advisers and the years they served, etc.)
- Induction ceremony script and a copy of the printed program used each year
- Service project records detailing projects undertaken for school or community by the chapter in past years
- A copy of the most recent national catalog of insignia, publications, and supplies for the chapter
- Copies of the *NEHS Newsletters* for reference.

To facilitate the development of the chapter filing system, please consider using the following list of topics for your files:

Adviser duties/job description
Affiliation with the national office
Attendance policies/charts
By-laws, Local
Calendar
Chapter Goals
Charter
Discipline policies
Dismissal procedures
Faculty Council duties/job description
Fundraising projects and policies
Induction ceremonies/scripts
Meeting agendas
Member responsibilities and obligations
Mentoring guidelines
NASSP Dept. of Student Activities (national office)
National Constitution
NEHS Network/Other chapters nearby
NEHS Newsletters
Officer job descriptions
Principal: Reports for; Relations with
Projects: Leadership development
Projects: Responsibility
Projects: Scholarship promotion
Projects: Service and Service-Learning
Selection procedures

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For additional assistance, please refer to the *NEHS National Handbook* (2008 edition) or the national web site, www.nehs.org for more information about NEHS policies and procedures.

The national office trusts that the information presented in this handout proves helpful for chapters engaged in writing or reviewing their chapter bylaws. Questions or concerns can be sent to the national office staff via email, nehs@nehs.org , or by writing us at NEHS, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 20191.

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