

The Souhegan High School Constitution

Preamble

In the words of our Mission Statement, Souhegan High School aspires to be a community of learners born of respect, trust, and courage. Community in that Souhegan encourages its many diverse constituents to become involved in their governance. Respect in that each governing body respects the decisions of the others. Trust in that each governing body trusts the others to govern. Courage in that the members that comprise all governing bodies have the courage to speak their minds on issues that matter to them and to seek solutions to problems that they encounter. In an effort to clarify and define the roles, rights, and responsibilities of each of these diverse groups in the governance of Souhegan, we present this Constitution to the Souhegan Community.

Article I

Section 1:

The Souhegan Community shall honor and implement the ideals set forth in the Mission Statement and the Souhegan Six.

Souhegan Mission Statement

Souhegan High School aspires to be a community of learners born of respect, trust, and courage. We consciously commit ourselves:

To support and engage an individual's unique gifts, passions, and intentions,

To develop and empower the mind, body, and heart,

To challenge and expand comfortable limits of thought, tolerance, and performance.

To inspire and honor the active stewardship of family, nation, and globe.

Souhegan Six

Respect and encourage the right to teach and the right to learn at all times.

Be actively engaged in learning; ask questions, collaborate, and seek solutions.

Be on time to fulfill your daily commitments.

Be appropriate; demonstrate behavior that is considerate of the community, the campus, and yourself.

Be truthful; communicate honestly.

Be responsible and accountable for your choices.

Section 2:

As a community of learners, Souhegan commits to a common philosophical core - an amalgam of values around which to teach and learn. Among these are integrity, courage, perseverance, and discipline.

Section 3:

Souhegan shall continually evolve through setting measurable goals, finding and acting out the will, the ways, and the means, evaluating the results based on valid and reliable data, and reassessing and rededicating to the targets or the methods chosen to achieve them.

Section 4:

The goals of the continual evolution of the Souhegan Community shall be to improve the (1) materials, and services provided to the Community, (2) educational opportunities within the Community, and (3) outcome of the educational opportunities and the ability of the opportunities to meet the needs and expectations of all members of the Community and all other entities with a vested interest in Souhegan, including parents, other members of the communities of Amherst and Mont Vernon, and colleges. In all three of these areas, an effort will be made to close the gap between the current situation (the way things are) and the creative future (the way things are desired).

Section 5:

All members of the Souhegan Community are entitled to representation in their government. Along with this representation comes the expectation that all members actively participate. Active participation by all members of the Souhegan Community will ensure that the continual evolution of Souhegan meets their expectations.

Section 6:

The continual evolution of Souhegan shall incorporate these elements:

- i. Chain of Command ³/₄ The subject and scope of decisions which committees, councils, administrators, and the School Board are entrusted to make will remain within the bounds set forth in Articles II and IV.
- ii. Consideration ³/₄ Representative views of community members affected by prospective decisions are solicited and considered.
- iii. Conformance ³/₄ Intended objectives align with Souhegan's Mission Statement, priority, objectives, and the Souhegan Six.
- iv. Cost ³/₄ Intended benefits justify the expected commitment of time, labor, materials, and other resources.
- v. Commitment and Accountability ³/₄ Community members collaborate, everyone doing his/her fair share.
- vi. Cycle Time ³/₄ Decision-making is timely and expeditious so that Souhegan can respond quickly to emergent problems and opportunities.
- vii. Corroboration and Inveteracy ³/₄ Decisions are driven by valid and reliable data.

Article II

Section 1:

Authority and responsibility for Souhegan is vested in the Souhegan Cooperative School Board by state and federal laws and by the State Board of Education. Authority and responsibility granted to others in this Constitution derive from the School Board.

Section 2:

The School Board operates in accordance with Articles of Cooperative Agreement adopted by the preexisting school districts of Amherst and Mont Vernon on October 24, 1989.

Section 3:

The responsibilities of the School Board shall include but not be limited to:

- i. The holding of regular board meetings for the transaction of business and the keeping of a written record.
- ii. The adoption of policies covering legal foundations, school board governance and operations, general school administration, fiscal management, support services, facilities development, personnel, instruction, students, school-community relations, and education agency relations.
- iii. The determination and periodic review of educational goals and short-term objectives for the high school, in consultation with the students, faculty, staff, administration, and community.
- iv. The preparation of and advocacy for the annual operating budget and the monitoring school expenditures.
- v. The actions required to accommodate all students in a safe, sufficient, and suitable school facility.
- vi. The adoption of policies to recruit, employ, train, evaluate, and retain teachers.
- vii. The appointment of board members to represent School Board on standing committees, special committees, and councils.
- viii. The involvement of board members in the educational program at Souhegan by school and classroom visitations, participation on committees, and by attendance at cultural, educational, and cocurricular programs.
- ix. The adherence to the School Board Member Code of Ethics:

Remember always that the first and greatest concern is the educational welfare and achievement of the students attending Souhegan.

Attend all regular scheduled board meetings insofar as possible, and become informed concerning the issues to be considered at those meetings.

Make policy decisions only after publicly held board meetings.

Render all decisions based on the available facts and independent judgement, and refuse to surrender that judgement to individuals or special interest groups. Encourage the free expression of opinion by all board members, and seek systematic communications between the board and students, faculty, staff, and communities.

Work with other board members to establish effective board policies and delegate authority for the administration of the schools to the superintendent of schools and the high school administrative team.

Communicate to other board members, the superintendent, and the principal, expressions of public reaction to board policies and school programs.

Keep informed about current educational issues by individual study and through participation in programs providing needed information, such as those sponsored by state and national school boards' associations.

Support the employment of those persons best qualified to serve as school faculty and staff, and insist on a regular and impartial evaluation for all faculty and staff.

Avoid being placed in a position of conflict of interest, and refrain from using one's board position for personal or partisan gain.

Take no private action that will compromise the board or administration, and respect the confidentiality of information that is privileged under applicable law or is received in confidence or nonpublic session.

Understand that board members have no authority over school affairs as individuals but only at properly called meetings where a majority of the board constitutes a quorum or when discharging an assignment made by the board.

Article III

Section 1:

Each year between September 15 and September 30 a complete listing of the administrative team, councils, committees, and panels shall be compiled and made known to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and School Board. This list shall include the following information: (1) administrative team, council, committee, or panel name, (2) name and address of members, (3) duties and responsibilities, (4) bylaws, if applicable.

Section 2:

The administrative team, each council, committee, and panel is empowered to suggest ways to improve any aspect of Souhegan. The following checklist will be used to identify the groups that are to be involved in development, approval, implementation, and/or evaluation.

What is the idea, problem, opportunity, proposal, plan?
Who needs to see it, hear it, read it, respond to it, work on it?
Who needs to improve it, and in what order?
What is agreed to be implemented: By whom, when, and how?
Were desired results achieved?

Article IV

Section 1:

The purpose of subsequent sections of Article IV shall be to state the purpose, duties, and responsibilities of each administrative team, council, committee, or panel.

Section 2:

The primary purpose of the Community Council is to govern Souhegan High School under authority derived from the School Board. The Community Council shall operate under the guidelines set forth in the Community Council Bylaws. The Community Council is entitled to: (1) act on and make policy concerning issues of importance to the Souhegan Community, including, but not limited to disciplinary policy, scheduling, GPA calibration and grade reporting system, and the contents of the student planner and athletic handbook, (2) raise funds in coordination with the Director of Athletics and Student Activities, and (3) organize school-wide activities such as Fang Fest and State of the Community days.

The Community Council is charged with the following responsibilities to: (1) make decisions in the best interests of the Souhegan Community, (2) spend funds in ways which are beneficial to the Souhegan Community, (3) solicit feedback from constituents, (4) keep a written record of all proceedings, actions, and policy, and to make such records available to all members of the Souhegan Community, and (5) be accountable to the School Board.

Section 3:

The primary purpose of the Community Review Board (CRB) is to hold hearings concerning cases brought to the board on appeal. The CRB shall operate according to the guidelines set forth in the CRB Policy. The CRB may take one of the three following actions regarding any case brought to the board on appeal: (1) uphold the decision of the administration, (2) set a new consequence that better fits the situation, or (3) nullify the consequence set by the administration.

The CRB is charged with the responsibilities of: (1) ensuring that all cases are heard in a timely manner, (2) making equitable decisions while upholding the rules of Souhegan and the spirit of the Mission Statement and the Souhegan Six, and (3) keeping a written record of all proceedings and decisions for use as precedent in future proceedings.

Section 4:

The Emergency Appeals Committee hears appeals when the Community Review Board cannot be convened because of time constraints.

Section 5:

The primary purpose of the Administrative Team is to make decisions concerning all aspects of the daily operation of Souhegan under authority derived from the School Board. The Administrative Team is composed of a Principal, Dean(s) of Students, and Dean(s) of Faculty. Each of these individuals shall carry out specific roles as outlined in his/her job description.

The Administrative Team is charged with the responsibilities of: (1) implementing School Board policy at the discretion of the Superintendent, (2) making daily decisions in the best interests of the Souhegan Community, and (3) ensuring that all members of the Souhegan Community are adequately represented in the decision-making process pursuant to Article III Section 2.

Section 6:

The primary purpose of Ad-Hoc Hiring Committees is to advise in the hiring process for specific positions within Souhegan. Such committees shall be formed as the need arises and disbanded upon completion of the hiring process. All members of the Souhegan Community shall be adequately represented on Ad-Hoc Hiring Committees pursuant to Article III Section 2.

Section 7:

The primary purpose of the Personnel Policies Committee is to provide employee participation in the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures affecting salaries, benefits, and conditions of employment. It is expected that the advice of the Personnel Policies Committee will be solicited on all personnel policies prior to presentation to and adoption by the School Board. The Personnel Policies Committee shall operate under the guidelines set forth in the Personnel Policies Committee Policy.

Section 8:

The primary purpose of the Faculty Steering Committee is to be an elected group that represents the concerns of the faculty.

Section 9:

Subject Area Coordinators have the following responsibilities within their respective subject areas: (1) facilitating curriculum review and development, (2) supervising and mentoring faculty members, (3) scheduling and facilitating meetings when necessary, (4) facilitating school-wide communication, (5) supporting the budget process.

Section 10:

Special Program Coordinators provide leadership in their respective programs, such as advisory, interns, and senior project.

Article V

Section 1:

Article V provides the necessary procedures to allow the Constitution to continually evolve with the Souhegan Community.

Section 2:

The Constitution shall be ratified through the following process:

- i. Gather feedback on the first draft from the following groups by the following means: Community Council – presentation, Students – feedback sheets distributed to advisories and open meetings, Faculty Steering – presentation, Faculty – presentation, Staff - presentation, Administration – presentation, School Board - presentation, Community – advertised public forum, PTSA, web page information.
- ii. Amend draft to incorporate suggestions from feedback, as appropriate.

- iii. Hold public forums to discuss revised document.
- iv. Ratify by a three-fifths supermajority of voters in each of the following groups: Students, Faculty/Staff, Administration, and Community via School Board
- v. The adopted document shall be distributed to all students, faculty and staff, administrators, and School Board members.

Section 3:

Each year, an Interpretation Committee shall be selected and convened by September 30. The committee shall be comprised of: (1) one student member elected by the entire student body, (2) one faculty/staff member elected by the entire faculty and staff, (3) one member of the Administrative Team chosen by the Administrative Team, (4) one member of Community Council chosen by Community Council, and (5) one School Board member chosen by the School Board. All members shall serve one-year terms.

If there is a dispute regarding interpretation of the Constitution, the committee will hold a public hearing in which both sides have the opportunity to present their case. The committee will then make a decision as to which interpretation is correct based on a majority vote. A written opinion explaining the decision of the committee will be available to all community members upon request.

If there is a proposed change, the committee will review the proposed change and hold a public hearing to solicit feedback on whether the change is a clarification or an amendment. The committee will then vote on whether the change is a clarification or an amendment. A four-person supermajority is required for the committee to decide that a change is a clarification..

If the Interpretation Committee determines that the change is a clarification, it may be immediately added to the Constitution. If the committee determines that the change is an amendment, it must follow the ratification procedure outlined in Article V Section 2. Amendments may not be adopted less than thirty days after the first draft is released for the initial feedback stage.

ADOPTION: June 1999