

# **The Parker Constitution**

*Ratified by the Student Body 03-08-06*

*Amended June 2013*

*Amended January 2016*

During the first month of the operation of Parker, the students met together to create a school constitution. Their task was to create a document that would describe how the students, teachers and parents would work together to make a fair, democratic and safe school. The students were divided into four committees: the executive, legislative, judicial, and preamble committee. Each group spent two to three days writing the document that would bring the students together as a community. In 1997-98, the constitution was looked over and amended. Most of it remained the same, but a list of Rights and Responsibilities was added and the judicial branch was modified. In 1998-99, a "Decision making process" was amended to the constitution. In 2005-06, the Parker Constitution was once more amended with several revisions regarding the realistic operations of the CC & JC in Parker. Another revision occurred in 2015-2016, with the major change being the Community Congress and Moderators sections. The current Parker Constitution reads as follows.

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of the Parker community, in order to form an outstanding learning environment, hereby write this Constitution to establish equality, to encourage educational and verbal freedom, and make this school a safe place where the members feel respected. As a whole, we maintain the balance between order and freedom and grant each individual his or her own respect, rights and responsibilities, in order to attain this exceptional environment we call the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School.

## **BILL OF RIGHTS**

We, the Bill of Rights committee, establish the Bill of Rights to ensure students and teachers understand their rights and recognize that they are equal.

### **Student and Teacher Rights**

1. The Community Congress cannot make laws against rights of free speech, religion and others, such as respect, fairness and equal treatment.
2. People have the right to defend themselves at Justice Committee hearings. The difference between defensive action and offensive action shall be decided by the Justice Committee.
3. People cannot be searched and belongings cannot be taken from them without reasonable proof.
4. People have the right not to answer questions that incriminate them or put them in danger.
5. People have the right to have their case be heard by the Justice Committee.
6. No consequences may be given that are cruel or unreasonable.
7. People have the right to a safe learning environment.
8. People have a right to vote on all school wide elections and to be represented in the CC.
9. Students have a right to learn at their own pace.

### **Parent Rights**

1. The right to give any type of input.
2. The right to remove their children from Parker.

### **COMMUNITY CONGRESS**

The Community Congress (CC) is a representative body, responsible for creating and attending to the norms and policies that affect students and student life in the Parker community. The CC expresses the voice of the student body in matters of school policy and in communication with the Principal and faculty.

#### **Representatives:**

Each Division elects six (6) representatives. Elections are held in September and representatives serve for one year. If a representative is no longer able to serve, a special election will be held at a time deemed appropriate by the moderators.

- **Terms Limits for Representatives:** All representatives are allowed to serve unlimited terms, provided that the student body vote the representatives into office each year.

#### **Moderators:**

The Moderators are elected representatives of the Parker student body and represent the student body at various formal and informal school events. The Moderators are ambassadors, representing the school to the external world. The Moderators are responsible for facilitating the meetings of the Community Congress and are voting members.

- Three (3) people run as a group to be the Moderators for the CC. Moderators are elected by the student body in May of each academic year. These elections are facilitated by the JC.
- Moderators serve for a one (1) year term.
- **Term Limits for Moderators:** An individual may not serve as a Moderator more than two (2) times during his/her time at Parker.

### **JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

The Justice Committee (hereafter 'JC') of the Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School is the judicial branch of the government. Its main purpose is to maintain peace and civility in the Parker community.

#### **A. The Justice Committee**

1. The JC will be run by students with 2-3 faculty members in an advising role.
2. The JC is responsible for resolving and/or mediating violations of Parker rules, community norms of safety and respect, and personal conflicts.
3. The JC does not have jurisdiction in certain areas that are regulated under state and/or federal law (i.e. Weapons, sexual harassment, and controlled substances). All inappropriate cases will not be handled by the JC.
4. The JC does not have the authority to suspend or expel students. However, if the JC decides that a student has committed a suspendable or expellable offense, they may recommend that

consequence to the principal for a suspension/expulsion hearing (for a list of the suspendable and expellable offenses, see Suspension and Expulsion Policy for the Parker School).

5. Students have the right to have two JC members present at a suspension/expulsion hearing.

6. The JC is responsible for interpreting the Constitution in a hearing when there is a disagreement over the meaning of a part of the Constitution.

7. The JC is responsible for ensuring that the Constitution is upheld at all times during a hearing.

8. The JC is responsible for administering all school-wide elections.

9. The JC will provide a yearly written report to ensure that the Parker community is kept informed of JC decisions and business. To ensure that confidentiality is maintained, this report will not contain the names of any offenders.

10. The JC has the authority to assign detentions. (See Detention Policy in Student Handbook)

### **B. Hearings/Mediation**

1. The JC will have hearings where a member(s) of the Parker community can bring another member(s) of the Parker community to have a case heard in front of a group of JC and faculty member. (Members will include all students and faculty members in the Parker School.)

2. There will be no more than four and no less than two student JC representatives sitting on a case. There will be one faculty member per case.

3. All JC members will be trained in mediation and counsel hearings.

4. All JC members will take an oath of confidentiality.

5. Attendance at JC hearings is mandatory. The accuser and the accused must be present at the hearing. Any other parties/witnesses will be determined by the JC on a case-by-case basis.

6. Individual students participating in JC hearings have the right to bring another person to the hearing or mediation with them as a witness, faculty member or JC representative, to the proceedings.

7. Consequences will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

8. All parties must agree to mediation if the JC determines that mediation is appropriate.

9. Mediation will be done on a case-by-case basis. Community members involved in the mediation may decide whether they require JC members and/or the guidance counseling staff.

### **C. Membership**

1. Elections for the JC Leaders, by secret ballot, will take place in the month of May.

2. The JC will meet once a week.

3. The faculty will select 2-3 teachers interested in serving on the JC in any way that they choose.

### **D. Impeachment**

1. Any member of the Parker Community may recommend the impeachment of a JC member. This recommendation should be made to a JC Leader.

2. Possible reasons for the impeachment recommendations:

a. A member breaks his/her oath of confidentiality.

b. A member breaks the Parker community norms and/or is brought to the JC repeatedly.

3. Members of the JC may be asked to resign if a majority of the JC finds a violation of the standards listed in the above section. They will be impeached if there is a lack of cooperation.

4. Impeachment votes must be done by secret ballot, which all members vote on.

## **RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **A. General Rights and Responsibilities**

At the beginning of each school year, all members of the Parker community are asked to sign the Parker Community Contract of Rights and Responsibilities. This document is meant to serve as a compilation of norms by which the Parker community members agree to abide. These are “guidelines” for appropriate behavior (not “rules”, for which punitive consequences exist).

1. Every member of the Parker community has the right to be treated with courtesy by all members of the community and the responsibility to treat all faculty, parents, visitors, and students with courtesy.
2. Every member of the Parker community has the right to believe what s/he wants and the responsibility to employ thoughtful habits of mind/learning.
3. Every member of the Parker community has the right to express concern and the responsibility to do so using an appropriate time, place, tone and attitude.
4. Every member of the Parker community has the right to have their personal belongings respected by others.
5. Every member of the Parker community has the right to enjoy and participate in the Parker community and the responsibility to not disrupt the enjoyment and the participation of others.
6. Every member of the Parker community has the right to be supported in his/her learning style and the responsibility to do his/her own work well, ask for help, and give appropriate help.
7. Every member of the Parker community has the right to use materials in the classroom and resources at Parker and the responsibility to use them wisely and return them in the same condition in which they were found.
8. Every member of the Parker community has the right to have his/her voice heard and the responsibility to listen to others.

### **B. Classroom Responsibilities**

1. Students have the responsibility to turn in assignments when due and teachers have the responsibility to return assessed work within a reasonable period of time. If assessed student work is not returned in a reasonable time, additional time for revision of work should be provided to students.
2. Both student and teachers should show effort to participate fully in class.
3. Both students and teachers should show sufficient effort to be on time for class
4. A *reasonable* break time should be provided to both students and teachers during full-block classes.