

The Flex Constitution

Preamble.

We the people of the Flexible Scheduling Program hold these truths to be self-evident, that all Flexies – freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior are created equal. We the seniors of Flex have written this Constitution as a document through which the members of the Flex Program can hold themselves accountable to the ideals, principles, and laws herein stated. It is our hope that this constitution will be a living document with the ability to adapt, change, and evolve as the culture and ideals of Flex evolve. However, the only way in which it has the ability to evolve must be through the vote of the Flex Program in its entirety, for though it is a living document and has the ability to be amended, we wish for the values of Flex to remain true throughout the years.

Article I. The Values of the Flex Program

The Flex Program demonstrates a unique example of education – a remnant of the model of democratic schools in the 1960's. It is our hope that this document would help to further preserve this rare and cherished program. This first article is meant to be a mission statement that will put the values and ideals of Flex on display, which will allow the students of the Flex Program to hold themselves and each other accountable to the established beliefs of the program. First and foremost, we are human beings before we are anything else. Therefore, it must be the first priority of the Flex Program to value its individuals as equal human beings first, which will allow for just treatment for both students and teachers in all classes, community events, and in any instances of evaluation of a student.

This calls for compassion, empathy, and justice, and it must be the goal of each member of the Flex Program to perpetuate these qualities in word and action. Second, in recognizing that first and foremost each student in the Flex Program is an equal human being, our goals in education hold a responsibility to the Four C's of Flex: Courage, Compassion, Curiosity, and Civic Engagement. Courage is essential to the Flex Program in every way, whether finding the gumption to speak up in seminar or seeking out and creating opportunities in and outside of school to impart social and political change. Courage is a building block of Flex because it is through courage that each student can realize his or her potential and take part in meaningful action for the betterment of Flex and the community. Compassion allows for the members of the Flex Program to grow in their character and treat others with respect, kindness, and understanding. Compassion compels the individuals of the Flex Program to seek the truth and stand up for what is right in order to prevent injustices from occurring. Curiosity is the backbone of the Flex Program because it is the glue that holds the program together. In brief terms: we are a community of learners striving for truth, delving deeper into exploratory learning, and engaging in the source material because of our desire to learn and not for the award of a certain grade. We must always remember that unity is not agreement. Unity is *not* agreement. Flex must always remain a curious community even in the midst of conflict and struggle.

Finally, civic engagement is another one of the goals that builds the foundation of the Flex Program because it is a constant reminder that reaching both outward and inward is crucial for the betterment of Flex and the surrounding communities in the Metro-Detroit area. We must not hide our light, for our learning and education is useless if we do not choose to utilize it to serve others. Consequently, civic engagement enables the Flex Program to implement one of the most important values of the Flex Program itself: service learning and servant leadership.

Therefore, when asked what the mission of the Flex Program is, we will respond: To wholeheartedly engage in learning with a passion for service, truth, and diversity of thought.

Article II. Seminar

The root and foundation of the Flex Program fulfills our goal of college-based and discussion-based learning: seminar. Seminar allows the students of the Flex community to deeply understand and have an in-depth comprehension of the source material. The definition of seminar is engaging the source material by engaging with the people around you. One of Flex's major goals is teaching students *how* to think rather than *what* to think, to develop thoughts for oneself, and to decide for oneself the beliefs that he or she holds dear. For, in order to truly believe in something, one must be able to answer the question: Why do you believe it? Flex does not desire to establish one affirmed belief system among its students, but rather desires to encourage students to stand firm in their beliefs and have the knowledge and information to remain steadfast in those beliefs in the face of opposition.

Consequently, seminar must foster an environment that allows for the individuals of Flex to express their thoughts, ideas, and beliefs while respectfully holding students accountable for their beliefs. The following is a statement of the ideals of seminar:

1. Actively Listen – one learns more by opening the ears than by opening the mouth.
2. Fluid discussion – micro-managing conversation does not lead to in-depth learning, allow the conversation to take hold of your heart and mind and not focus on the grade.
3. Make connections – intertwining the ideas of different sources produces thoughtful and meaningful discussion and epitomizes the goal of seminar.

4. Balance – every voice must have the opportunity to be heard, dominance is not the goal, the definition of conversation is an *exchange* of ideas.
5. Respect – oppose ideas and not people, one can speak with passion and respect simultaneously.
6. Confidence – it must be the goal of every student to speak with confidence and instill confidence in others to encourage the contribution of all students.
7. Make the conversation relevant – applying the learning of yesterday allows one to understand the current events of today.
8. Dig deeper – strive to go beyond the surface of the discussion, sometimes stating the obvious is important, but reading in between the lines and delving into the source material allows for real understanding.
9. Immerse oneself in the material – copious notes and active reading are the building blocks of meaningful discussion, each student is bound to the obligation to engage the material and each student must hold their fellow Flexies accountable for engaging the source material.
10. Passion – excitement and enthusiasm for the material and for discussion is an essential element to inspiring learning outside of the classroom.

The separation is in the preparation. In order for seminar to always remain the heart of the program, the students of Flex must always strive to hold themselves accountable to truly learn the source material.

All students of Flex are expected and required to contribute and actively participate in seminar. The expectations of each student will increase as each student goes on in the program.

Article III. Town Hall

Flex Town Halls are to be used to implement the voice of Flex students, to address problems, and to propose new ideas. The goal of any Town Hall is to seek solutions and not just dwell on problems. Any student may call for a Town Hall by asking the Flex Team and providing the proper reasoning for the Town Hall through a written document. All Flex Students must be given two days prior notice of a Town Hall and the reasoning for it being called before it occurs in order to provide time for independent thought on the issues at hand. Town Halls are mandatory for all students and may not be excluded to specific grade levels.

Town Halls are to be held in the auditorium to accommodate all Flex students, but Flex Team members are not to be permitted within the auditorium. Flex Team members are also not permitted to ask questions about what is going on during the Town Hall while it is in progress, or purposely try to overhear anything that is going on inside.

A line should form at the front of the auditorium for people who want to propose a topic of conversation for the town hall. After the topics have been stated, a mediator will form an agenda and all of Flex will vote to approve the agenda.

Article IV. Peer Mediation

Mediation Defined: Mediation is a structured, orderly, confidential process where a neutral person, called a mediator, uses listening skills and mediation techniques to help the disputants define the problem they wish to resolve, and then the mediator helps them come up with their own solutions to the problem.

Peer mediators' first responsibility is to be a student's advocate. Students can approach peer mediators with issues they may have with teachers, peers, or the program. A peer mediator will automatically be provided for you for issues within Flex, unless the student in question waives their right to a peer mediator. A teacher cannot waive the student's right to a peer mediator. However, mediators cannot be provided in cases of academic misconduct and illegal activity because these situations extend beyond Flex's jurisdiction.

Peer mediators are decided through application and are limited to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. The application should outline the level of commitment that is required and applicants have to state current activities they are involved in. Current mediators must reapply every year.

Article V. Amendment Process

Though the Constitution is meant to have its values preserved, it is necessary that an amendment process be presented in order to ensure the adaptability of this document. There are five steps in the amendment process:

1. Petition

- a. If a Flex student, or group of Flex students, desires to present an issue with the Flex Constitution or a program-specific issue. To clarify, this petition is meant to address an issue within the Flex Program, and, therefore, this does not include issues that can be addressed within Town Hall. Town Hall, as previously stated is a forum meant for immediate and specific topics or events that are issues that either need to be discussed or need to be addressed and solved, also, Town Hall does not include the teachers of the Flex Program, whereas, the meetings for the

Flex Constitution will always include the teachers as it is a matter of the program as a whole, which includes both faculty and students. There will be specific meetings to address the Constitution alone. Petitions are meant to be amendments made to change or add to this document specifically.

- b. The Flex student, or group of students, must receive a certain amount of signatures and approval in order for their petition to continue in the amendment process. The petition must be signed by 15% of the students within the Flex Program and must receive two teacher signatures. Signatures from teachers do not mean that the teachers who chose to sign the petition agree with what the petition says, the teacher signatures are to act as a legitimizing factor in the petition process to validate that it is a change or addition that deserves the opportunity to be talked about.
2. After 15% of the Flex student body has signed the petition and after the petition has also received two teacher signatures, the petition is then approved to move on in the process. A week notice as well as an online posting of the petition must be provided in order to have a meeting in the auditorium with the entire Flex Program to discuss the petition. This meeting is separate from a Town Hall meeting and is specific to dealing with the Flex Constitution, and a week notice must be given in order for the students of the Flex Program to read the petition, discuss with other students, and have the opportunity to present supporting and opposing arguments.
3. This section of the amendment process will address how the meeting in the auditorium will function.

- a. One class period, either first or second hour, will be provided as a time constraint for the meeting in the auditorium to discuss the petition and potential changes or additions to the Flex Constitution.
- b. First, the student, or students, who wrote the petition will have first right to speak at the front of the auditorium. The speaker(s) will have a time limit of five minutes to present their petition to Flex. After they have finished, the students will return to their seats and the opposing voice(s) will have the right to speak at the front of the auditorium.
- c. Second, an opposing opinion must be provided by another Flex student(s). This individual will then have the opportunity to present the opposing opinion of why the petition presented should not result in a change or addition to the Flex Constitution. The opposing voice(s) will also have a time limit of five minutes to present.
- d. Third, an open forum discussion will follow the two speakers' presentations in order for the Flex student and teacher body to voice their opinions and have a conversation about the two opinions. This open forum discussion will be mediated by a generally-agreed-upon mediator in order to enforce the time limit for speaking and in order to ensure that all voices who desire to speak have the opportunity to be heard. The job of the mediator is to facilitate an equal opportunity conversation in which every student and teacher has the chance to be heard and the chance to speak without interruption for the time allotment. During the open forum discussion, each student and teacher speaker will have a time limit

of 1 minute and thirty seconds to speak. It is the mediator's job to keep control of the time limit and regulate speakers if they continue to exceed the time limit.

- e. Fourth, at the end of the class period, the mediator will give a five minute warning to let Flex know that there are only five minutes remaining in class. At that point, the open forum discussion will close, and the mediator will announce that all of Flex, both students and teachers, will have 24 hours to vote anonymously online either for or against the petition. The mediator will never vote unless there is a dead tie in the polls.
 - f. Fifth, the voting process takes place over the course of 24 hours from the time that school ends the day of the meeting to the end of the school the next day. Voting will open online when school ends on the day of the meeting and will close at the end of school the following day. The online voting process will be completely anonymous, and *the decision made will be based on those who participated in voting and not based on the amount of people in all of Flex*. To clarify, the petition, or potential amendment, can only pass with a supermajority (two thirds plus one) of those who voted.
 - g. Sixth, if the amendment does not pass in the voting process, the student(s) who wrote the petition must wait four weeks from the day voting closes if he or she would like to reintroduce the petition. However, new petitions will take precedent over petitions that are being reintroduced.
4. If the amendment passes, the petition will be added to the hard copy document, which is controlled by a teacher. At the time of the addition of the amendment, only the teacher

who safeguards the document, along with the writers of the petition, may be present in order to ensure the accuracy and integrity of the addition of the amendment.

A Note to Flex:

The seniors of the Class of 2016 have created and nurtured this document into being. The Flex Constitution is an incredibly unique document, and we feel so honored and humbled to have had the opportunity to provide Flex with an official piece of writing that designates the values and ideals of the Flex Program along with a process to amend this document. We implore you, please, to take care of it. Cherish this as a symbol of the remarkable nature of the Flex Program, for it is not and never will be merely a class. It is a family, a community of learners, a second home, an instrument of change, an intellectual environment, and a sign of hope. Be grateful, be appreciative, be the best that you can be, and never take one moment for granted. If you give your heart to Flex, your door to the world will surely open.