

Peers Advancing Literacy in Students at The Ohio State University Student Organization Constitution

ARTICLE I. NAME OF ORGANIZATION

The name of this organization shall be Peers Advancing Literacy In Students at The Ohio State University hereinafter referred to as Pen PALS.

ARTICLE II. ORGANIZATION PURPOSE

The mission of Pen PALS is to establish an outreach program which addresses some of the challenges faced in the Columbus City School District and similar low-income elementary schools across the country while simultaneously educating college students about these issues. Pen PALS aims to improve the writing skills of elementary school students by providing a personal connection to a college student via a pen pal relationship, one on one interactions, and seminars which aim to inform the mentors about various social justice issues.

As an organization which is meant to bring people together and create role models in young people's lives, Pen PALS does not discriminate on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, protected veteran status, or any other bases under the law, in its activities, programs, admission, and employment.

ARTICLE III. UNIVERSITY REGULATIONS

Section A. Harassment and Discrimination, including Sexual Misconduct

Pen PALS agrees that it will not engage in sexual misconduct nor any harassment or discrimination on the basis of age, ancestry, color, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic information, HIV/AIDS status, military status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, protected veteran status or any other basis in accordance with the Student Organization Registration Guidelines.

Section B. Hazing

Pen PALS agrees to maintain a zero-tolerance policy for hazing, in compliance with Ohio State University and Collin's Law. All members must conduct themselves in a manner that supports an environment free from hazing. Hazing includes any activity, regardless of consent, that causes or creates a substantial risk of physical, mental, or emotional harm or humiliation to any individual as part of membership or affiliation with the student organization. If found responsible for hazing, members and/or the organization may face disciplinary actions.

Section C. Bylaws

Pen PALS *retains the right to maintain separate bylaws to outline the day-to-day operations of the organization and to clarify policies and procedures otherwise not included in the previous articles. Bylaws and/or other guiding documents may not take precedence over the requirements set forth by local, state, and federal laws, The Ohio State University's regulations, policies, and procedures, and the Council on Student Affairs (CSA) Student Organization Registration Guidelines. Organizations may make amendments and changes to the bylaws without consulting the Ohio Union & Student Activities department, and changes to bylaws do not require approval. All elements of organizational bylaws shall be consistent with the organization's currently approved constitution on file and CSA constitution requirements.*

ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP

Section A. Membership Eligibility

All currently enrolled undergraduate students in good academic standing at The Ohio State University shall be eligible to apply for membership in Pen PALS. Good academic standing is defined as a Cumulative Point Hour Ratio of at least 2.00, as stated in Rule 3335-9-23 of the Ohio Administrative Code and The Ohio State University Code of Student Conduct.

Pen PALS shall consist of two types of members:

- Members actively writing to a pen pal
- Members placed on the waitlist

Both types of members are eligible to participate in seminars, fundraisers, alternative writing programs, and organization giveaways.

Section B. Member Selection

Steps to Gain Membership

1. Each prospective member must submit an application for membership.
2. The new member application will be made available by early September.
3. All qualified applicants will be permitted to participate in Pen PALS unless the number of elementary pen pals is fewer than the number of mentor applicants.
4. If mentor applicants exceed available pen pals, mentors will be selected in the following order:
 - a. Returning mentors in good standing
 - b. New applicants on a first-come, first-served basis determined by application submission time
 - c. Applicants previously removed from the program
5. Once selected, mentors will be paired with pen pals and confirmed as active members.

If an applicant cannot be paired with a pen pal, they may choose to be placed on the waitlist.

Waitlisted members may become active mentors if:

- A new elementary pen pal joins the program
- A mentor is removed from the program
- A mentor voluntarily becomes inactive

The waitlist will be created in the order that applicants request placement. Members who previously had a pen pal that moved away will be placed at the top of the waitlist.

Section C. Membership Timeline

Membership applications will open by early September. Applicants will be informed of their membership status approximately two to three weeks after applying. Pairings will occur once applications are reviewed and pen pal availability is confirmed.

Section D. Member Removal

Pen PALS mentors are responsible for writing in their journals during weeks specified by the Executive Board. Members must attend mandatory seminars and have the option to participate in organizational activities throughout the semester. A member may be removed if they conduct themselves in a manner that hinders the organization, violates Article II of the bylaws, or violates The Ohio State University Student Code of Conduct.

Pen PALS uses a strike system for mentor participation:

- One strike is given if a mentor does not write during an assigned week.
- One strike is given if a mentor does not attend a mandatory seminar without a documented or verifiable excuse.
- A half strike is given if a mentor submits an emailed letter instead of a handwritten entry.
- Mentors will be notified when a strike or half strike is issued.
- A mentor who receives two strikes within one academic year will be removed from the program.

If a mentor is removed and reapplies in a future semester, they will be considered a new applicant and selected only if mentor positions are available.

ARTICLE V. ADVISOR

Section A. Advisor Duties and Responsibilities

The Advisor shall serve as a resource to Pen PALS and provide guidance to the Executive Board and general body as needed. The Advisor shall not vote or hold office within the organization. The Advisor is responsible for supporting organizational continuity, ensuring compliance with university policies, and offering recommendations when requested by student leadership.

The Advisor must fulfill all minimum requirements established by the Council on Student Affairs, including completing advisor training every two years, completing the anti-hazing training module, submitting online approval of the organization's registration annually, submitting approval of the organization's goals annually, approving any CSA Operating or Programming funding requests initiated by the Treasurer, following all applicable laws, regulations, university rules, policies, and guidelines, and completing any relevant reporting obligations.

Additional involvement beyond these requirements is voluntary and at the discretion of the Advisor.

Section B. Advisor Term

The Advisor shall serve a one-year term with the opportunity for reappointment. The Advisor may continue serving in the role for multiple terms upon mutual agreement between the Advisor and the Executive Board. The Advisor may step down at any time by notifying the Executive Board, and a replacement will be selected according to the process outlined below.

Section C. Advisor Selection

The Advisor must be a full-time member of The Ohio State University faculty or Administrative and Professional staff and must meet all university requirements for student organization advisors. Potential advisors may be identified by members of the Executive Board, general body members, or through recommendations from university departments.

The Executive Board shall be responsible for confirming the Advisor, and selection shall require a simple majority vote of the Executive Board. Once confirmed, the selected Advisor must agree to serve and complete all university certification requirements.

Co-advisors may be appointed if desired and may include classified civil service employees, graduate associates, emeritus faculty, or retired staff; however, the primary advisor must be a full-time faculty or Administrative and Professional staff member.

Section D. Advisor Replacement

The Advisor may be removed for failure to meet required university obligations, violation of university policies, conduct detrimental to the organization, inability to fulfill advisor responsibilities, or voluntary resignation. The Executive Board shall review concerns and determine whether removal is necessary, and removal shall require a two-thirds affirmative vote of the Executive Board. Following removal or resignation, the Executive Board shall initiate the advisor selection process to appoint a replacement.

ARTICLE VI. ORGANIZATION LEADERSHIP

Section A. Officer Positions

The Executive Board of Pen PALS shall consist of the following positions and responsibilities:

President

1. Serve as the face, leader, and primary contact for Pen PALS.
2. Call, conduct, reserve meeting space, and prepare for the Executive Board Meetings.
3. Help create goals for each Executive Board member and follow up on their completion.
4. Attend President's Training as required by the Student Organization Guidelines.
5. Serve in direct report to the following Ohio State University entities: the Vice President for Student Life, Assistant Vice President for Student Life, Associate Director of Student Philanthropy, Ohio Union Administration and Staff, the faculty advisor, and any other entities that the Associate Director of Student Philanthropy may deem necessary.
6. Serve in direct report to any participating schools involved in the program including, but not limited to, the school board, teachers of the particular classrooms involved, and any administration within the buildings Pen PALS works with.
7. Work with an Executive Board Member and committee member, if it is voted that the specific committee is run unfairly, in order to create a new structure of the committee.
8. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
9. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Vice President

1. Serve as a substitute for the President if needed.
2. Evaluate effectiveness of the organization by sending polls to teachers, mentors, and Executive Board members.
3. Oversee the completion of all required expectations per board member, and if necessary, act as the leader of disciplinary procedures if those expectations are not met.
4. Work with the President to ensure smooth operation, including working on uncompleted delegated tasks.
5. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
6. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Transportation Executive

1. Ensure the transportation of the journals between the school districts and The Ohio State University.
2. Coordinate assistance with loading and unloading the journals if desired.

3. Lead direct communication with all schools, including receiving point of contact information such as phone numbers.
4. Create a shared calendar that clearly coordinates all pick up and drop off dates that can be shared with general body members.
5. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
6. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Communications Director

1. Send out a scheduled weekly email to mentors concerning upcoming seminars, due dates for the journals, and any other necessary information.
2. Respond to any emails in the Pen PALS email within at least 24 hours, including a consistent and routine check of the inbox during the morning hours and the evening hours.
3. Notify mentors if they received a strike and what their total strike count is as of that week.
4. Notify mentors of removal from the program if they have received two strikes.
5. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
6. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Marketing and Social Media Director

1. Respond to any messages on social media platforms within at least 24 hours.
2. Photograph events such as the seminars, involvement fair, and the end of the year event in order to better advertise the program in the future.
3. Organize Pen PALS' involvement fair, including but not limited to, being present for the duration of the event, creating marketing materials such as handouts, brainstorming incentives for prospective members, and creating informative information boards.
4. Have access to and post on all social media accounts created.
5. Maintain and update the club website as needed.
6. Maintain the overall consistency in appearance and messaging of PenPALS as a brand in all marketing efforts.
7. Advertise the application process and distribute the application for new and returning mentors, along with other applications throughout the year.
8. Organize the planning and distribution of club merchandise.
9. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.

10. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Treasurer

1. Attend Treasurer's Training as required by the Student Organization Guidelines.
2. Ensure the materials necessary for journaling have been acquired at the beginning of the semester.
3. Oversee all financial operations.
4. Approve all financial undertakings the organization deems necessary, including approving proposed budgets created by other executive board members.
5. Head all fundraising events.
6. Apply to outside funding or resource applications which could better the organization.
7. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
8. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Seminar Coordinator

1. Schedule and organize at least two (2) seminars for the mentors and/or Ohio State students each semester. Mentors shall be notified of these events at the beginning of each semester via the Communication Chair. Each topic should be approved by the Executive Board. Mentors should be asked which topic areas they would like to see presented on at the beginning of the year.
2. Responsible for finding a guest lecturer, speaker, or presenter that will teach the general body members about a topic relevant to the mission of PenPALS.
3. Keep track of attendance at all seminar events.
4. Assist the Events Director when necessary, especially during the Spring Semester.
5. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
6. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

End of Year Director

1. Plan at least one event at the end of spring semester which brings the PenPals to campus in order to meet their mentor. This includes organizing a date and time, transportation, activities, and advertising this date to pen pal mentors at least one month in advance via the Communication Directors emails.
2. Assist the Seminar Coordinator when necessary, especially during the Fall Semester.
3. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.

4. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Operations Manager

1. Create the application for New Membership and determine which Mentors wish to continue in the program in the future.
2. Create an automated spreadsheet that keeps track of the journals, which ensures including whether or not the OSU student or elementary student has written during each respective writing week.
3. This includes sending emails that inform members of their strikes and updating spreadsheets with accurate information.
4. Manage and run the journal reading committee that proofreads all letters and writes replacement letters each writing week.
5. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
6. Attend ALL journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the President and Vice President.

Recruitment Executive

1. Organize the beginning of year orientation meeting, this includes:
 - a. Setting a date and time
 - b. Booking any Ohio Union spaces that can accommodate the entire general body and confirming reservations
 - c. Budget, plan, and execute any incentives such as food, catering, or the Coke Grant
 - d. Decorate the room and make the space welcoming and appealing to new general body
2. Organize Pen PALS' involvement alongside leadership and be present at the Fall Involvement Fair to advertise for the program in order to recruit mentors.
3. Organize and lead two (2) outreach events per semester. This can include collaborations with other organizations or campus-based programming such as service events.
4. Find new ways to reach out to students, including but not limited to branded posters around campus, contacting department chairs, or other on campus contacts.
5. Attend all Executive Board meetings- unless noted at least a week in advance and missing no more than two meetings per semester.
6. Attend 2 journal committees per semester unless a class conflict has been discussed with the Operations Manager.

Section B. Officer Eligibility

To be eligible to assume an officer position, a candidate must be an active member of Pen PALS in good standing and an enrolled student at The Ohio State University. The President and Treasurer must be full-time students, and the Vice President and all other officers must be students in good standing, in accordance with university requirements. Officer candidates must demonstrate reliability, active participation in the organization, and the ability to fulfill the responsibilities of the office to which they seek appointment or election. Candidates should also be capable of maintaining the time commitment, communication standards, and participation expectations associated with Executive Board service, including attendance at Executive Board meetings and completion of position-specific duties. Current Executive Board members shall be eligible to seek returning or new officer positions for the following academic year, and general body members in good standing may be considered for any positions that remain unfilled after the internal Executive Board selection process has concluded. These eligibility criteria shall not conflict with any provisions set forth elsewhere in this Constitution.

Section C. Officer Selection Process

All Executive Board positions for the following academic year shall be confirmed by spring break. The officer selection process shall begin with the current President announcing whether they intend to return to the position for the following year. If the President wishes to return, the remaining Executive Board members shall vote on whether the President will continue in the role. All Executive Board members present, excluding the President, must vote, and any member unable to attend may submit their vote electronically. The President shall only be removed from returning to the position if the required removal threshold established by the organization is met. If that threshold is not met, the President shall resume the office for the following year. If the President does not return, the position shall first be opened to current Executive Board members. Any interested candidate shall be permitted to give a prepared speech stating why they wish to be President. Following those speeches, the current President and eligible Executive Board members who are not running for the position shall vote. In the event of a tie between two candidates, the current President shall serve as the tie-breaking vote. If more than two candidates are running and a tie occurs among the leading candidates, another vote shall be conducted between those candidates, and if a tie still remains, the President shall cast the deciding vote. The votes shall be counted privately by the President and Vice President, and the final decision shall be announced at the conclusion of the process. If no current Executive Board member seeks the presidency, the position shall be opened to the general body, the application shall remain open for one week, interviews shall be conducted the following week by the current President and two other Executive Board members, and a decision shall be made within forty-eight hours of the final interview. All applicants shall be notified of the decision by email.

Once the President for the following year has been determined, the remaining Executive Board positions shall be filled. Current Executive Board members shall first indicate whether they intend to return to the Executive Board. If a member does not intend to return, their position shall become vacant. If a member does intend to return, they shall rank the available positions in order of preference. The current President shall review those rankings and assign members to positions where possible. If a position is uncontested, the interested member shall be assigned to that role. If multiple members request the same role, each candidate shall give a prepared speech explaining why they want the position, and the current Executive Board members present, excluding the candidates for that office, shall vote. The candidate receiving the most votes shall be assigned to the position. Members not selected for that office shall then be considered for the remaining available positions. After positions have been assigned, Executive Board members shall have one week to raise concerns to the current President regarding another member's ability to fulfill an assigned role. If concerns are raised, the President shall notify the questioned member, present the concern at the following meeting, allow the member to respond and answer questions, and then require the member to leave the room while the remaining Executive Board members vote. If the required vote threshold for removal from that assigned role is met, the member shall not serve in that position. The President and Vice President shall review the results privately and announce the decision.

Any positions not filled through the internal Executive Board process shall then be opened to general body members. Interested members shall complete a standard application and participate in an interview conducted by the current President and the incoming President or Vice President. Interviewers may use a standardized scoring process to evaluate responses, and the applicant with the strongest overall application and interview performance shall be appointed. If a tie occurs, the President shall make the final decision. All candidates shall be notified of the result within forty-eight hours. Each newly selected Executive Board member shall be responsible for meeting with the previous holder of that office at least once before assuming the role, unless the previous officer was removed, in which case transition shall occur through the President. Newly selected officers are encouraged to attend a regularly scheduled Executive Board meeting before the end of the year. Officers shall officially assume their positions after the final Executive Board meeting, and if a vacancy occurs after that time, responsibilities may be temporarily divided among the remaining Executive Board members until a replacement is selected and prepared to assume the role.

Section D. Officer Removal

Any Executive Board member of Pen PALS may be removed for sufficient cause. Sufficient cause for removal includes, but is not limited to, violation of the constitution or bylaws, conduct deemed prejudicial to the best interests of the organization, or conduct deemed hostile toward a member of Pen PALS within the context of the organization.

Prior to a vote on removal, the Executive Board shall follow a due process procedure. First, the Vice President shall issue a written warning to the officer detailing all infractions. If the behavior persists, the officer shall then meet with the President and undergo a performance improvement plan appropriate to the situation. If the Vice President again identifies behavior that qualifies as an additional infraction, the President and Vice President shall meet to discuss further action, which may include proceeding with removal.

Before any final action is taken, the Executive Board shall hold a formal hearing. The officer shall have the opportunity to personally appear at the hearing and present a defense to the charges prior to a vote on removal.

ARTICLE VII. ORGANIZATION DISSOLUTION

Section A. Dissolution Requirements

In the event that Pen PALS is proposed for dissolution, the Executive Board must unanimously decide to no longer continue the organization. All Executive Board members must be present in order to vote, and the vote must occur at a regularly scheduled meeting. Prior to the vote, the President shall present a statement addressing why the organization cannot continue. A period for questions and discussion shall follow, during which Executive Board members may discuss alternatives and potential solutions to avoid dissolution. If no clear solution is identified, the Executive Board shall vote to either continue or dissolve the organization. The President and Secretary shall count the votes and report the results to the Executive Board.

Section B. Dissolution Procedures, including Assets and Debts

If the organization votes to dissolve, the Executive Board shall be responsible for executing dissolution procedures. The Treasurer shall first review any outstanding debts and present multiple options for eliminating those debts. The Executive Board shall vote on the most appropriate method for resolving outstanding financial obligations. For each proposed option, Executive Board members shall vote on whether the option is viable. If multiple viable options exist, the Executive Board may discuss combining options and conduct an additional vote to determine the most appropriate solution. The option receiving the most votes shall be implemented. Under no circumstances shall debts be left to The Ohio State University or its affiliated entities.

If outstanding funds remain after all debts have been resolved, the remaining assets shall be distributed equally among the schools previously served by Pen PALS. The Treasurer may form a committee, if necessary, to assist with resolving debts and distributing remaining funds.

ARTICLE VIII. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Section A. Amendment Process

Amendments to this Constitution may be proposed by any member of the Executive Board. The Constitution shall be reviewed annually by the President and Vice President, and proposed changes shall be presented to the Executive Board. The Executive Board shall be given notice of proposed amendments and an opportunity to review and discuss the changes at a regularly scheduled meeting.

If concerns arise regarding proposed amendments, discussion shall occur at the following meeting and a vote shall be taken. Approval of constitutional amendments shall require a majority vote of the Executive Board members present. Abstentions shall not count toward the total number of votes cast.

The amended Constitution shall take effect upon approval by the Executive Board and submission to the Ohio Union and Student Activities Department. Should leadership transition or amendments occur between registration cycles, the current Constitution shall remain in effect until the revised Constitution is submitted and approved. Submission for approval of an amended Constitution shall occur within thirty days of adoption of the amendments.