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# THE CONSTITUTION OF THE ECO-PARLAMENT

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SZIGNUM KÉTTANNYELVŰ EGYHÁZI ÁLTALÁNOS ISKOLA



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## Constitution

*The constitution of the Eco-parliament sets out the aims, membership, and operation of the parliament*

This document was created based on this document:

<https://www.parliament.act.gov.au/visit-and-learn/resources/general/school-parliament>

A status of the eco-parliament and the operating rules = The constitution of the ECO-SCHOOL PARLIAMENT

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## 1. The name of our school parliament:

**Szignum Eco-Parlament**

## 2. Aims and functions

- 1. involve students in democratic processes and decisions making within the school;**
  - ✓ demonstrate the importance of representation and active involvement in the school community;
  - ✓ democratically elect student representatives;
  - ✓ develop student leadership and communication skills;
  - ✓ give a forum for the presentation of student ideas and opinions on school policies that directly impact students;
  - ✓ improve the school community by addressing student issues and concerns;
  
- 2. The Sustainable Development Goals**
  - ✓ Learn about SDGs
  - ✓ What students can do to take action to make them a reality.

## 3. Members

Number of members that the body have: 25

- Students who were elected by the students of the school: 1-4 person per class, total: 22 students
- One alumni student, who lead the first session and act as the president until a member is elected to this role.
- 2 support teachers who volunteered to guide the students in organizing the eco-parliament

## 4. Electing members

- The term of office should be established prior to election:

***The term of office: 2 February 2021- 15 June 2022***

- Students interested in being a member of the school parliament go through the process of nominating to stand as a candidate. Schools can facilitate a pre-election period in which students are able to address their peers and outline their ideas and plans. Students guidelines for nominating and campaigning to ensure a free and fair election:

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- Online questionnaire filled up by all students grade 4-8. The questionnaire asked the students recommendation for nominating members of the eco-parliament (grade 4-8.)
- Candidate is the student, who has received at least 5 nomination from their peers. The campaign time is 2 weeks, when candidates can expose their posters and use other tools to advertise their program.
- Rules on campaigning: appropriate use of language, provision of true and accurate information, promises made are achievable and promises are not used as an inducement (e.g. "I will give a chocolate for everyone who votes for me").
- Elections is made by confidential ballot (i.e. where students write the name of their preferred candidate on a piece of paper which is placed in a secure ballot box).

All students are able to vote and if a student is standing for election they are able to vote for themselves.

- o Replacing members

A student who leaves the school parliament will need to be replaced. There are two options for the replacement process.

1. **Hold a by-election**—the class or year that elected the departing member would vote again for a new member. Nominations would be called for, there would be a short campaign and the students would vote.
2. **Countback**—involves looking at which student came second in the previous election and requires that voting information from each election is kept for possible future countbacks. Ballot papers from each election are kept and a countback is conducted to determine the next person eligible to be the new member.

### 5. Parliamentary roles and responsibilities

There are the following **positions** within our parliament:

Members can be elected to positions following a nomination process. Where there is more than one nominee, members can hold a vote. They are elected by secret ballot using a ballot box and individual voting papers.

#### President

The president is the head of the parliament The President essentially chairs the meeting of the chamber. The president is responsible for maintaining order and ensuring the smooth running of the sitting by:

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1. chairing sittings of the school parliament;
2. ensuring members follow parliamentary procedures with the assistance of the Vice-president;
3. keeping order by ensuring the order of business is followed, that members can be heard when speaking and every member has a chance to contribute to debates;
4. sending a letter on behalf of all members to the school principal

The **Vice-president**, in the absence of the President, performs duties of the President

### **Deputy Speaker**

It is useful to rotate the Deputy Speaker into the role of president from time to time in order that both the president and Deputy Speaker are able to participate in parliamentary discussions about particular school issues (in normal parliamentary practice, when the President or Deputy Speaker is in the chair, they do not participate in debates).

### **Clerk (Note keeper)**

The Clerk is responsible for:

- recording the minutes of each parliamentary sitting;
- presenting the minutes of previous sitting;
- recording member votes on decisions made.

**Members** are responsible for:

- consulting with the students that they represent (in their class ) to get feedback on ideas, issues or concerns they would like raised in the school parliament;
- representing their classmates in the school parliament by raising ideas and issues discussed in class or year group meetings;
- developing ideas for bills, with the help of all other members;
- providing information back to students that they represent on the decisions of the parliament; and
- helping the implementation of decisions by participating in the committees;

### **Support teachers**

A support teacher with a special interest in school government can provide a vital link between the students, staff and the school management. The teacher will be able to support the students by helping them develop skills in communication, leadership and decision making. They can also help by providing information on school policy, advice on implementing decisions and administrative back-up to the members of the school parliament.

### 6. Parliamentary chamber

The members sit in a circle. This arrangement is important. The circle helps toward an atmosphere, where every member is heard, seen and respected.

### 7. Sittings of the school parliament

This section of the school parliament constitution set out how sittings operate.

- frequency of sittings: monthly;
- time of meeting: 1 hour;
- quorum (minimum number of members needed for the sitting to proceed): 12;
- agenda (template in Appendix 1);
- minutes;
- voting.

#### **First Sitting**

- The first sitting requires the parliamentary roles to be filled. The parliamentary roles are elected by student members of the parliament by secret ballot with members submitting their vote by writing it on a slip of paper and placing it in a cardboard ballot box. The support teacher performs the roles of President and Clerk until the positions are filled by student members.
- After the positions have been elected, the next item of business should be discussion and acceptance of the school parliament constitution and the support teacher is required to prepare a draft constitution and explain how it would operate. Members could propose amendments or discuss areas that they aren't sure about as part of this preliminary step.

### 8. Sitting procedures

- The parliament determines its own schedule for sitting dates and times. The sitting agenda sets out the order for business items will be debated (Appendix 1). Debate on any topic can be adjourned to another sitting day if more time is needed to consider an issue, this should be noted in the minutes and remain an item on the agenda until a decision has been made.
- Decision making may require discussion with the principal/staff, such matters can be adjourned to the next sitting where a final decision can be reached.
- When proposals are voted on, the Clerk has to write down exactly what the proposal is and whether it is won or lost. Before voting the president clarifies the forms of voting (Appendix 2)

### 9. Committees

- Committees are formed to help support the work of members in the parliament. All members who do not already have specific roles in the parliament can nominate to be on a committees to help implement the decisions of the parliament.
- Committees explore issues in greater detail outside of the parliament. This could include developing new bills to go before the parliament, investigating options for fundraising, holding meetings with students on specific projects to ensure student feedback is considered.

### 10. Amending the constitution

The members have the right to amend the constitution, add new information or remove information that is no longer relevant.

Changing the constitution is an important item of business. It can be done in the school parliament through a debate and vote. As the founding document of the school parliament any additions, deletions or changes to the constitution needs to be passed by a two thirds majority of the members. The support teacher should play a role in providing advice on any impacts of changing the school parliament constitution and can also provide feedback to the parliament from the school principal and/or executive if it is relevant to the proposed change.

## Appendix 1: Sitting agenda

Meeting place and time:

Order of Business

1. Open sitting.
2. Attendance (to verify quorum) and apologies.
3. Previous sitting minutes and business arising.
4. Bill introduction and debate.
5. Summary
6. Close sitting.

## Appendix 2: Forms of Voting

The parliament uses two forms of voting: **open and secret ballot.**

There are 3 levels of agreement:

- **Simple majority:** more than half of the total votes
- **Two thirds majority**
- **Consensus:**

There are 3 options: (1) support the agreement, (2) accept it (which means you may not totally agree but can live it), or (3) block it.

Consensus means that **nobody blocks the agreement.**