



National Honor Society Guidelines and General Information

*Foster D. Bittle Chapter,
Southern Garrett High School*

Introduction

The National Honor Society (NHS) is the nation's premier organization established to recognize outstanding high school students. More than just an honor roll, NHS serves to honor those students who have demonstrated excellence in the areas of Scholarship, Leadership, Service, and Character. These characteristics have been associated with membership in the organization since its beginning in 1921.

Today, it is estimated that over one million students participate in activities of the NHS and its middle level counterpart, the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS). NHS chapters are found in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and many U.S. Territories and Canada. Chapter membership not only recognizes students for their accomplishments, but challenges them to develop further through active involvement in school activities and providing community service.

History of the Organization

In 1921, the NASSP officially established the National Honor Society. Though many local and regional honor societies existed prior to 1921, no nationwide organization had been founded. Under the leadership of Dr. Edward Rynearson, principal of the Fifth Avenue High School, Pittsburgh, Pa., the organization grew from the original Alpha Chapter at the Fifth Avenue School to more than 1,000 chapters by 1930. Equipped with a constitution, an emblem and motto, and a group of dedicated principals as coordinators, the new NHS organization quickly developed into one of the country's leading educational groups.

Four main purposes have guided chapters of NHS from the beginning: "To create enthusiasm for scholarship, to stimulate a desire to render service, to promote leadership, and to develop character in the students of secondary schools." (from the NHS Constitution) These purposes also translate into the criteria used for membership selection in each local chapter.

In 1929, the NASSP turned its attention to middle level schools and expanded the scope of its concern for recognizing outstanding students by establishing the National Junior Honor Society (NJHS). With its own constitution and handbook, NJHS has established criteria that parallel the emphases found in the NHS with an added purpose to encourage citizenship. (Additional information on establishing a chapter of the NJHS is available upon request from the NASSP Department of Student Activities.)

Both the NHS and NJHS are sponsored and supervised by NASSP which appoints a National

Council - the controlling body of NHS. In addition, National Council members also serve as the selection committee for the prestigious NHS Scholarship which has been administered annually in schools with NHS chapters since 1946.

The day-to-day administration of NHS national concerns is handled by the NASSP Department of Student Activities, headquartered in Reston, Va.

Selection Criteria

The NHS National Council establishes the national standards for all NHS chapters. Local chapters create their own by-laws which are to be consistent with and comply with the NHS National Constitution.

Any student in grades 11 through 12 in a school with both an official charter of the National Honor Society and an affiliation with the NASSP Department of Student Activities is eligible for consideration for membership in the National Honor Society. All membership selection is handled through the local school chapter.

NHS is more than just an honor roll. The NHS chapter establishes rules for membership that are based upon a student's outstanding performance in the areas of scholarship, service, leadership, and character. These four criteria for selection form the foundation upon which the organization and its activities are built.

The following process and criteria were established by the Faculty Council of Southern Garrett High School for the Foster D. Bittle Chapter of the National Honor Society. The Faculty Council is appointed annually by the Principal. The process towards membership begins with the nomination process, proceeds to Probationary membership, and ends with Induction into the National Honor Society.

Nomination Process

Students in either the 11th or 12th grade who meet the scholarship criteria, a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.7, are nominated for membership to the National Honor Society. The grade point average is taken from the end of the prior school year. A letter indicating nomination to NHS and a student activity information form is sent to parents and student during September or October. The completed student activity information form must be received by the advisor by the date listed in the letter. If the student does not return the completed activity form to the advisor by the required date, then the advisor and Faculty Council assume the student declines nomination to the National Honor Society. Therefore, the student is dropped from the NHS membership process for that school year.

During the nomination process the entire faculty is allowed to rate and comment upon nominated students in the areas of service, leadership, and character. All evaluations are signed and evaluators are expected to support any below-average ratings with substantiating data based on sound professional judgment and action. Anonymous faculty evaluation forms will never be used. Both the student activity information forms and the faculty evaluations are working documents to assist the Faculty Council in making sound decisions regarding membership. The

forms are used only by the Faculty Council, the NHS advisor, and the principal and are considered confidential.

The student activity forms and the faculty evaluations are reviewed by the Faculty Council, along with any other verifiable information about each candidate. The Faculty Council may choose to personally interview candidates. The service, leadership, and character of all candidates are reviewed carefully. Candidates receiving a majority vote by secret ballot of the Faculty Council then progress to the Probationary Membership level. Letters are sent to students/parents stating whether or not they have been accepted into probationary membership.

Probationary Membership

Probationary membership begins after students have been successfully nominated and approved by the Faculty Council

- **Scholarship:** By the end of Fall semester, students must have a cumulative weighted grade point average of 3.7 to become a member of the National Honor Society.
- **Service:** This quality is defined through the voluntary contributions made by a student to the school or community, done without compensation and with a positive, courteous, and enthusiastic spirit. ~~By the March meeting, students must have all service learning requirements for graduation completed. In addition, students must have participated in 3 National Honor Society activities, which can include advisor approved Individual Service Projects. Individual Service Projects emphasize the need for cooperative effort in service to the community while providing for individuals to discover and develop their unique contributions. ISPs must be pre-approved by the advisor, contain required signatures, and the ISP form must be fully completed and turned in by the March meeting to receive credit. ISPs must be performed and completed during the Probationary membership period. THIS REQUIREMENT HAS BEEN WAIVED FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR DUE TO COVID.~~
- **Leadership:** Student leaders are those who are resourceful, good problem solvers, promoters of school activities, idea-contributors, dependable, and persons who exemplify positive attitudes about life. Leadership experiences can be drawn from school or community activity while working with or for others. Students who are involved in situations where leadership is questionable may be reviewed and dismissed by the Faculty Council. As leaders, NHS probationary members are expected to participate and attend meetings. ~~Students can not miss more than two meetings unexcused up to and including the March meeting. Students missing more than two scheduled meetings without excuse will be reviewed and may be dismissed by Faculty Council. As leaders, NHS members and probationary members are expected to participate in a majority of NHS sponsored activities. THIS REQUIREMENT HAS BEEN WAIVED FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR DUE TO COVID.~~
- **Character:** The student of good character upholds principles of morality and ethics, is cooperative, demonstrates high standards of honesty and reliability, shows courtesy, concern and respect for others and generally maintains a good and clean lifestyle. Students who are involved in situations where character is questionable may be reviewed and dismissed by Faculty Council.

Specific standards for the above four criteria may vary from one school to the next. Such variations are acceptable as long as they do not fall below the standards set by the National

Council of the NHS. All chapters are required to write down the criteria and procedures used in their local selection processes. The NHS adviser maintains copies of the local procedures and has them available upon request.

Membership in NHS

Once selected by the local selection committee, known as the Faculty Council, a student is awarded membership in the local chapter at a special induction ceremony. (The Faculty Council only votes on those students who have met the four basic requirements. Students who have not met the requirements will not be considered for membership.) With induction, a member assumes certain obligations (listed below).

- **Scholarship:** National Honor Society members whose cumulative grade point averages drop below 3.7 weighted will be placed on academic probation for one semester. If the cumulative grade point average does not reach 3.7 weighted by the end of the probationary period, the Faculty Council will convene and the student may be dismissed.
- **Service:** ~~Prior to the May meeting, students must have participated in 3 National Honor Society activities, which can include advisor approved Individual Service Projects. THIS REQUIREMENT HAS BEEN WAIVED FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR DUE TO COVID.~~
- **Leadership:** As leaders, NHS members are expected to participate and attend meetings. ~~Students can not miss more than two meetings unexcused. Students missing more than two scheduled meetings without excuse will be reviewed and may be dismissed by Faculty Council. As leaders, NHS members are expected to participate in a majority of NHS sponsored activities. THIS REQUIREMENT HAS BEEN WAIVED FOR THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR DUE TO COVID.~~
- **Character:** The student of good character upholds principles of morality and ethics, is cooperative, demonstrates high standards of honesty and reliability, shows courtesy, concern and respect for others and generally maintains a good and clean lifestyle. Students who are involved in situations where character is questionable may be reviewed and dismissed by Faculty Council.

Dismissal and Appeal Process

Members who fall below the standards which were the basis for their selection shall be promptly warned in writing by the chapter advisor and given a reasonable amount of time to correct the deficiency, except that in the case of flagrant violation of school rules or civil laws a member does not necessarily have to be warned. A hearing is scheduled for the member to present his or her case prior to the vote of the Faculty Council. Once the member is given notice and the opportunity to respond to the charges, the Faculty Council may vote to dismiss a member. For purposes of dismissal, a majority vote of the Faculty Council is required. A member who has been dismissed may appeal the decision of the Faculty Council under the same rules for disciplinary appeals in the school district.