



Elementary Student Council Quick Start Guide

A practical guide to getting your student council up and running—without the overwhelm.

Welcome: You Can Do This

If you're here, you're probably thinking: "I'd love to give my students more voice and leadership opportunities ... but where do I even start?"

Good news—you don't need a perfect plan, a huge group, or a ton of extra time. Elementary student council should be **simple, joyful, and doable**.

This guide will walk you step-by-step from idea, to the first meeting, to the first project.

Start small. Keep it fun. You've got this.

Why Student Council in Elementary School Matters

At the elementary level, student council isn't about running large-scale events or formal leadership structures—it's about giving students their **first experience with leadership and voice**.

When done well, student council helps students:

- Build confidence speaking and sharing ideas.
- Learn how to work as a team.
- Practice problem-solving in real situations.
- Feel a stronger sense of belonging at school.
- Engage in creating a more inclusive school culture.

Even small projects—like a spirit day or kindness campaign—can have a lasting impact.

What Student Council Looks Like in Elementary School

Let's reset expectations—this will look different than middle or high school.

Elementary student council is:

- Structured and guided by adults
- Activity-based (less talking, more doing)
- Focused on simple, visible wins
- Inclusive and encouraging for all students

It is NOT:

- Fully student-run
- Long or formal meetings
- High-pressure leadership roles

Teacher Tip: Think of yourself as a coach and facilitator, not just an adviser.

Before You Start: Set Yourself Up for Success

Before launching, take 15–20 minutes to think through a few basics:

- When will you meet? (lunch, before/after school, flex block)
- How often will you meet? (weekly, monthly, etc.)
- How many students feels manageable for you?
- Will you start small this year and grow next year? (recommended!)
- What are your administration's goals for the council?

Keep this in mind: A small, successful council is better than a large, overwhelming one.

Step-by-Step Startup Plan (First 4 Weeks)

Week 1: Make a Simple Plan

- Decide: Will you have class representatives or an open group?
- Decide: How will you recruit or fill positions?
- Choose a consistent meeting time.
- Set a rough start date.

Adviser Tip: Don't over plan—you'll figure things out as you go.

Week 2: Recruit Students

Keep this easy and welcoming:

- Make a short announcement.
- Invite interested students to join.
- Ask teachers to encourage participation.

Optional: Use a simple interest slip (name + why they want to join).

Goal: Build excitement—not barriers.

Week 3: Hold Your First Meeting

Focus on connection and energy—not perfection.

- Learn names.
- Explain what student council is.
- Do something interactive.

Success = Students leave excited to come back.

Week 4: Plan a Small First Project

Choose something simple and visible:

- Spirit Day(s)
- Kindness Week
- Thank-you cards for staff

Rule of thumb: If it feels complicated, scale it down.

Choosing a Structure

There's no one right way—pick what works for your school and schedule.

Option 1: Class Representatives

- 1–2 students per class
- Selected by teacher or simple vote

Option 2: Open Membership

- Any interested student can join.

Option 3: Hybrid Model

- Representatives + open participation opportunities

Rule of thumb: Start with open membership or a simple model your first year.

Your First 3 Meetings (Expanded)

Meeting 1: Welcome + Build Community

Objective: Students understand what student council is and feel excited.

Agenda (30–40 min):

- Icebreaker (5–10 min)
- “What is student council?” (5 min)
- Brainstorm ideas for school improvement (10–15 min)
- Share out (5–10 min)

Say this: “Student council is a group of students who work together to make our school even better.”

Meeting 2: Choose a Focus

Objective: Narrow ideas and pick one goal.

Agenda:

- Review ideas from the last meeting.
- Group similar ideas.
- Vote or agree on one simple project.
- Start planning basic steps.

Keep it simple: Avoid long debates—guide them to a decision.

Meeting 3: Take Action

Objective: Start implementing the plan.

Agenda:

- Assign simple, supported roles.
- Create materials (posters, notes, etc.).
- Practice announcements or responsibilities.

Teacher tip: Students will need guidance—model what to do.

Fully Scripted First Meeting (Grab-and-Go)

Opening (2 min): “Welcome! I’m so excited you’re here. You were invited because we think you can help make our school even better.”

Icebreaker (5 min): Ask: “If you could change one thing about school, what would it be?”

Explain student council (3 min): “Student council is a team. We share ideas, solve problems, and help others.”

Activity (15 min): Students draw or write ideas for improving school.

Closing (5 min): “Next time, we’re going to choose one idea and make it happen.”

Simple First Project Ideas

Start with something manageable and fun:

- Spirit Day (pajama day, color day)
- Kindness Challenge
- Thank-you campaign for staff
- School compliment board

Teacher tip: Quick wins build momentum and confidence.

Year-at-a-Glance (Flexible Guide)

Fall: Launch + Build Community

- Start the council.
- Run a small project.
- Build excitement.

Winter: Service + Impact

- Plan a service activity.
- Focus on helping others.

Spring: Leadership + Celebration

- Reflect on the year.
- Celebrate accomplishments.
- Think about next year.

Reminder: This is a guide—not a checklist.

Equity and Inclusion Tips

Elementary student council should be accessible to all students.

- Avoid overly competitive elections.
- Encourage a variety of students to participate.
- Provide different ways to contribute (speaking, drawing, helping).
- Celebrate effort—not just leadership.

Goal: Every student feels like they belong.

Common Pitfalls (and How to Avoid Them)

Trying to do too much too fast

Start small and build over time.

Too much talking, not enough doing

Keep meetings active and hands-on.

Expecting independence too soon

Provide structure and modeling.

Overcomplicating roles or systems

Keep everything simple.

Frequently Asked Questions

How often should we meet?

Many student councils meet once a week or every other week, but some—especially at the elementary level—meet once a month. The best schedule depends on your school's calendar, your students' availability, and the goals of your council. The key is finding a consistent meeting rhythm that helps students stay engaged and gives enough time to plan and follow through on projects.

How long should meetings be?

30–45 minutes max.

Do we need officers (president, etc.)?

Not at first—focus on participation.

What if students lose interest?

Make meetings fun, active, and visible.

Communicating With Families

Let families know what student council is all about:

- Builds leadership skills
- Encourages responsibility
- Gives students a voice

Sample message: “Our student council helps students work together to improve our school through leadership, service, and teamwork.”

Final Encouragement

Your student council doesn't need to be perfect to be meaningful.

If your students:

- Feel heard
- Work together
- See their ideas come to life

...then you're doing it right.

Start small. Stay flexible. Celebrate every win.

You're building something that matters—and your students will remember it.

Need support? The National Association of Student Councils is here to help!

Contact natstuco@natstuco.org