



**Tidewater Chinese School**

泰華德中文學校

**Constitution and Bylaws\***

憲章及校規

\*Adopted by the General Membership Meeting on December 19, 2009.  
於 2009 年 12 月 19 日全體成員大會通過

# **CONSTITUTION OF TIDEWATER CHINESE SCHOOL**

## **ARTICLE I. NAME AND HEADQUARTERS**

Section I.1 The name of this organization shall be Tidewater Chinese School, hereinafter referred to as TCS.

Section I.2 The address of TCS shall be designated by the Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE II. OBJECTIVES**

Section II.1 The objectives of TCS are to teach Chinese language, and, to a lesser degree, to offer complimentary classes in Chinese culture to any interested party, regardless of their race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or birth place. Each semester, the Board of Directors shall determine which classes are to be offered, based on interests and resources for each of them.

## **ARTICLE III. POLICY**

Section III.1 TCS shall promote, sponsor, and encourage educational programs, projects, and activities to enhance the learning of Chinese language and culture by all who will abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of TCS.

Section III.1a Educational programs shall include, but not limited to, both traditional and simplified Chinese language, culture classes, as well as any subject areas deemed by the Board of Directors to be important to Chinese heritage.

Section III.1b Simplified and Traditional Chinese language classes shall always be taught if the beginning enrollment of two students or more per class is met.

Section III.1c Any educational program, other than those directly related to language teaching, requires the prior approval by the Board of Directors.

Section III.2 TCS shall support community activities that advocate and enhance the Chinese heritage and image. The participation of any such community activity requires the prior approval by the Board of Directors.

Section III.3 TCS shall be a non-profit, non-partisan, and non-sectarian organization.

Section III.4 TCS shall have no collective interest in the politics of any foreign country.

Section III.5 TCS shall neither solicit, nor receive any financial assistance from any foreign government with any obligations. However, financial assistances for teacher training could be considered with the prior approval by the Board of Directors.

Section III.6 Any contact with a foreign government by TCS, for the purpose of soliciting teaching materials, requires the prior approval by the Executive Committee of Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP**

Section IV.1 The membership shall consist of Chinese-Americans and all others, regardless of color, sex, religion, national origin, or birth place. A member must be over eighteen years of age, subscribe to and meet the objectives and policies herein stated, in accordance with the Constitution and the Bylaws of TCS.

## **ARTICLE V. AMENDMENTS**

Section V.1 The Constitution shall be reviewed every five (5) years, and any amendments thus deemed necessary shall be made in accordance with the Bylaws.

The TCS Constitution was initially adopted by the general membership meeting on December 19, 2009.

## **AMENDED TCS BYLAWS**

### **ARTICLE 1 PURPOSE**

Section 1.1 The Tidewater Chinese School, hereinafter referred to as TCS, is established with the purpose of teaching Chinese language and exposing the students to Chinese culture. TCS operates on the principles of integrity, mutual respect and non-discrimination, and upholds a drug-free and violence-free environment in the community.

### **ARTICLE 2 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP**

Section 2.1 TCS membership shall consist of Chinese-Americans and other persons who are interested in furthering the teaching of Chinese language as well as Chinese culture, regardless of color, sex, religion, national origin, or birthplace. A member must be at least eighteen (18) years of age, subscribe to the objectives and policies herein stated in the Constitution and the Bylaws of TCS, and meet one of the three following conditions:

- (a) A parent or a legal guardian of a student who is under the age of eighteen (18) and currently enrolled in any class at TCS.
- (b) Current teachers of any class at TCS.
- (c) Any student at least eighteen (18) years old who is currently enrolled in any class at TCS.

Section 2.2 All members shall be entitled to all privileges of TCS equally.

Section 2.3 The membership shall meet at least once a year to elect a Board of Directors and to resolve any important issues. Each member shall have one (1) vote.

Section 2.4 Decisions of the general membership meetings are final.

### **ARTICLE 3 LIABILITY AND TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

Section 3.1 No member shall be personally liable for any debts, liabilities and/or obligations of TCS.

Section 3.2 Any member may voluntarily terminate membership and, if applicable, withdraw his/her students at any time upon delivery of a written notice to the Registrar of TCS. No refund of tuition will be made after school has been in session for four weeks or more of a semester.

Section 3.3 Any member who violates the Constitution and/or Bylaws of TCS, may be censured by a majority vote of the Board or expelled by a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the

Board. The said member shall have the right to appeal to the Appeals Committee within two weeks after being informed of the Board's decision.

#### ARTICLE 4 **ORGANIZATION**

Section 4.1 TCS shall consist of its members, a Board of Directors, hereinafter referred to as the Board, an administrative office, hereinafter referred to as the office, a Parent Teacher Association, hereinafter referred to as the PTA, and working committees, as needed.

#### ARTICLE 5 **BOARD OF DIRECTORS, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, TERMS**

Section 5.1 The Board shall consist of nine (9) elected directors, hereinafter referred to as the Directors, among which three (3) are Officers to form an Executive Committee, five (5) are Directors without portfolio, and one (1) is the President of the PTA. Only one member of a single family can serve on the Board at any one time. No Director shall receive compensation for his/her voluntary services.

Section 5.2 All Directors shall be elected at the Annual General Membership Meeting, hereinafter referred to as the Annual Meeting, by a majority vote.

Section 5.3 A Chairman of the Board shall be elected by a majority vote of the members of the Board.

Section 5.4 One Director shall be elected by a majority vote of the the members of the Board as the President of the PTA and shall be responsible to form the PTA.

Section 5.5 The Executive Committee, shall consist of the Principal, Vice Principal, and Treasurer, each elected by a majority vote of the the Board. The Principal and the Chairman of the Board shall not be the same person.

Section 5.6 The terms of the Officers of the Executive Committee shall be one (1) year. The Officers may be re-elected but may not occupy the same offices for more than two (2) consecutive years. The terms of the Directors without portfolio and the President of the PTA shall be two (2) years. Any Director may be re-elected after one (1) year off the Board. The term of any Director expires when the Director is no longer a member of TCS.

Section 5.7 No one can serve on the Board for more than four (4) consecutive years or six (6) years lifetime. The total number of years served by all members of a single family can not exceed this term limitation.

Section 5.8 In the event that a vacancy should occur in the office of the Principal, his/her unexpired term shall be filled by the Vice Principal. In case both the Principal and the Vice Principal positions are vacant, these positions shall be filled for their unexpired terms by the vote of a majority of the remaining Directors. If Board vacancies are more than fifty (50)

percent, a general membership election shall be called to fill the unexpired terms of the vacant positions with a slate recommended by the remaining members of the Board.

Section 5.9 All terms begin on July 1 in the year of election and end on June 30 in the following year.

## ARTICLE 6 THE ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE

Section 6.1 The Administrative Office, headed by the Principal, manages all aspects of the week-to-week administrative operations of TCS.

Section 6.2 The Administrative Office shall consist of three members of the Executive Committee, a Culture/Activity Manager, a Registrar, and a Secretary, who shall be addressed as Administrative Officers or Officers. No Officer shall receive compensation for his/her voluntary services.

Section 6.3 Assistants, one (1) each for the Treasurer, the Culture/Activity Manager, the Registrar, and the Secretary, may be appointed, as needed, by the Principal and added to the Administrative Office. The assistants shall be addressed as Staff and shall not have voting rights at Administrative Meetings.

Section 6.4 The non-elected Officers in the Administrative Office shall be appointed by the Principal and approved both by a 2/3 vote of the Executive Committee and the Board. No Board Member shall serve as an Officer or Staff in the Administrative Office.

Section 6.5 Only one member of a single family can serve in the Administrative Office at any one time.

Section 6.6 The Principal has the right to recommend to the Board the removal of any non-elected Officer or Staff in the Administrative Office.

Section 6.7 There are no term limits for the non-elected Officers or Staff as long as they are appointed as provided herein.

## ARTICLE 7 DUTIES OF BOARD MEMBERS AND ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

Section 7.1 Board Duties shall include ensuring compliance with the Constitution and Bylaws and approving the annual budget, the auditing report, and the nominations or removals of teachers as well as non-elected Officers and Staff of the Administrative Office.

Section 7.2 The Chairman of the Board shall preside at the monthly Board Meeting and coordinate the efforts among the Board, Administrative Office, and the PTA. The Chairman shall be responsible for responding and resolving any membership concerns brought to his/her attention. The Chairman can make or transmit any public announcement of Board activities with prior approval by the Board.

Section 7.3 The Chairman of the Board may assign those Directors without portfolio to chair standing committees for functions such as Annual Meetings, Special Membership Meetings, fund-raisers, and amending the Bylaws and/or Constitution. Only the Chairman has the right to make public announcement as regards to board activities or decisions.

Section 7.4 The Principal shall be responsible for the well-beings of TCS, represent TCS externally, have general supervision of all the activities of the school, and perform or coordinate the following functions:

- (a) Execute the Board's decisions.
- (b) Recommend, as needed, the appointment or dismissal of Administrative Officers and teachers.
- (c) Suspend or dismiss students as recommended by teachers.
- (d) Propose the school calendar for Board's approval.
- (e) Secure space for classes.
- (f) Make or transmit any public announcement related to academic or administrative activities.

Section 7.5 The Vice Principal shall assist the Principal in supervising the activities of the school and shall assume the office of the Principal in his/her absence or disability. The Vice Principal shall also perform the following curriculum duties:

- (a) Conduct the monthly teachers' conference.
- (b) Coordinate with teachers to develop curriculum programs to meet current or future needs.
- (c) Evaluate teachers and nominate candidates for Teacher of the Year award.
- (d) Arrange or select substitute teachers when needed.
- (e) Recommend the appointment or dismissal of teachers.
- (f) Oversee and manage the school library, copy machine, and storage locker.

Section 7.6 The Treasurer shall be responsible for all financial matters and shall ensure proper order of the funds. He/she shall keep appropriate books, prepare a written report on finances for each Board Meeting, file annual tax reports to IRS, send FICA and other forms to all teachers, and send acknowledgments to all donors. In conjunction with the Principal, he/she shall propose the annual budget for approval by the Board. The Treasurer is authorized to issue checks and pay expenses in amounts of two hundred dollars (\$200.00) or less. Checks in

amounts exceeding two hundred dollars (\$200.00) must be co-signed by the Principal. No payment will be reimbursed without a receipt. The Treasurer shall work with an external auditor, appointed by the Chairman of the Board and approved by a majority vote of the Board, to audit finances annually in the spring, and promptly present a written audit report to the Board for approval.

Section 7.7 The Culture/Activity Manager shall be responsible for organizing, planning and conducting school ceremonies as well as all cultural and social activities. He/she shall also perform other duties assigned by the Principal.

Section 7.8 The Registrar shall be responsible for maintaining and keeping all student records, including:

- (a) Prepare student registration forms.
- (b) Oversee all registration activities and coordinate student registrations.
- (c) Prepare student rosters.
- (d) Maintain students' attendance and performance records.

Section 7.9 The Secretary shall keep records of all businesses, correspondences, minutes of Administrative Officer meetings and shall forward meeting minutes to the Board. The secretary shall draft school newsletters as well as inputs to web design for approval by the Principal or, if the Principal so directs, the Vice Principal.

Section 7.10 All Directors, Officers and Staff shall, under the supervision of the outgoing Chairman of the Board or the Principal, transmit all documents to their respective successors at the end of their terms. Records of the transactions, signed and dated, shall be deposited in the central office, if one exists.

Section 7.11 All Directors are required to attend, in person, at least half of the scheduled Board Meetings in a school year. The rest of the Board Meetings may be attended by proxy executed in writing by the Director or a duly authorized person. Any TCS member may be designated as the proxy.

Section 7.12 Any Director or Officer absent for three (3) times from scheduled Board or Administrative Office meetings without a proxy or reasonable excuse may be removed from the Board or the Administrative Office by the Chairman of the Board or the Principal, respectively.

Section 7.13 The board of Directors has the right to interpret the Constitution and Bylaws. Any disagreement on the interpretation of the Constitution and by-laws made by the Board shall be resolved in the general membership meeting.

**ARTICLE 8**  
**QUALIFICATIONS OF BOARD OF DIRECTOR, OFFICERS AND TEACHERS**

Section 8.1 All Directors and Officers must have been parent or legal guardian members of TCS for at least one year. Only U.S. citizens, permanent residents or other legal residents in the United States of America will be eligible to hold office.

Section 8.2 In addition to the requirements of Section 8.1, the Chairman shall be able to preside over the Board meetings according to *Robert's Rule of Order* in English. The Chairman shall be proficient in speaking and writing both English and Chinese.

Section 8.3 In addition to the requirements of Section 8.1, the Principal and Vice Principal shall have demonstrated administrative leadership qualities and the ability to write and make public speeches proficiently in both English and Chinese.

Section 8.4 In addition to the requirements of Section 8.1, the Treasurer shall be proficient in bookkeeping and accounting practices, and shall have a working knowledge of U.S. Tax laws.

Section 8.5 School teachers shall have legal working permits in the United States.

Section 8.6 The appointment or dismissal of teachers shall be recommended by the Principal and the Vice Principal. Their recommendations shall be forwarded to the Board for approval.

**ARTICLE 9**  
**ELECTIONS**

Section 9.1 Election of new TCS Directors, presided over by the sitting Chairman of the Board or his/her designee, shall be held at the Annual Meeting on the last day of the school year.

Section 9.2 The Board shall select a Nominating Committee consisting of three Directors, with preference given to the outgoing Directors, on or before the first school day in February. The Nominating Committee shall produce a slate of candidates for the new Board according to the following schedule:

- (a) Announcement of the formation of the Nominating Committee and solicitation of nominations for Board vacancies on the first school day in March.
- (b) Nominations close on the first school day in April.
- (c) Announcement of the final slate of candidates on the first school day in May.
- (d) Candidates campaign on the last school day in May.

Section 9.3 Any TCS member shall be entitled to nominate any TCS member(s) as candidates for the Director position(s) by written submission to to the Nominating Committee. Each nomination shall be supported with the signatures of two (2) TCS members and that of the nominee. The Nominating Committee has right to make its own nomination of the candidates.

Section 9.4 The Nominating Committee shall ensure that all candidates meet the qualification requirements and that the final slate of candidates includes candidates qualified to fill the positions of members of the Executive Committee or the Chairman of the Board as specified in Article 8 of these Bylaws.

Section 9.5 To avoid conflicts of interest, any Nominating Committee member who is related to a candidate shall be excused from discussing or voting on such candidate.

Section 9.6 The candidates shall be classified as either parents or legal guardians of students, in Traditional Chinese or Simplified Chinese classes, herein referred to as TRD or SIM, respectively. The Nominating Committee shall prepare a ballot with two columns: one for TRD and one for SIM, if any.

(a) In each election, the minimal number of TRD candidates to be elected as TRD Directors shall be the difference between four (4) and the lesser number of continuing TRD Directors, provided that there is vacancy and if there are not enough TRD candidates on the ballot for such election the Board vacancies for TRD Directors shall be filled by the SIM candidates receiving the most votes after the SIM candidates elected as SIM Directors.

(b) In each election, the minimal number of SIM candidates to be elected as SIM Directors shall be the difference between four (4) and the lesser number of continuing SIM Directors, provided that there is vacancy and if there are not enough SIM candidates on the ballot for such election the Board vacancies for SIM Directors shall be filled by the TRD candidates receiving the most votes after the TRD candidates elected as TRD Directors.

(c) In each election, the maximum number of candidates to be elected shall be the difference between nine (9) and the lesser number of continuing Directors.

(d) Once elected, the Directors elected from SIM or TRD share the same privileges and rights.

Section 9.7 The vote-counting method is as follows:

(a) The new TRD Directors, the number of which is specified in Section 9.6(a), shall be the same number of candidates in the TRD column who received the most votes, provided there are enough TRD candidates on the ballot.

(b) The new SIM Directors, the number of which is specified in Section 9.6(a), shall be the same number of candidates in the SIM column who received the most votes, provided there are enough SIM candidates on the ballot.

(c) If any vacancy exists because of an inadequate number of either TRD or SIM candidates on the ballot, or because conditions in Section 9.6(c) are not met, each such vacancy shall be filled by the remaining candidates, whether TRD or SIM, with the most votes, in descending order.

Section 9.8 The conditions in Section 9.6 and Section 9.7 shall not be changed for at least five (5) years after these Bylaws are adopted.

## ARTICLE 10 ADVISORS AND STAFF

Section 10.1 To assist TCS in financial, legal, operational, or other pertinent matters, a number of Advisors and/or Staff may be appointed upon the recommendation by the Principal or the Chairman of the Board and approval by a 2/3 vote of the Board.

Section 10.2 “Advisor” is an honorary title and shall be offered for a two-year term to a member or non-member who can provide advice/assistance to TCS based on his/her expertise, knowledge or personal status. Any Advisor may be invited to attend Board or Administrative Meetings. The immediate past Principal and past Board Chairman automatically become Advisors of TCS.

Section 10.3 An invitation letter or a certificate, specifying the term of appointment shall be sent to all prospective Advisors at the beginning of the school year. The appointment becomes effective once the prospective Advisor accepts orally or in writing.

Section 10.4 Upon approval by a 2/3 vote of the Board, a number of Staff may be appointed to assist the operations of TCS. Staff shall perform assigned operational tasks required by TCS and provide reports of the tasks to the Principal or at the Board Meetings.

Section 10.5 The term and compensation, if any, to Staff shall be determined by the Board.

## ARTICLE 11 GOVERNMENT

Section 11.1 The Board shall establish policies for the operation of TCS in compliance with the decisions made by the general membership and in conformance with the provisions of the Constitution and the Bylaws.

Section 11.2 The Board shall oversee the operations of TCS and may remove any Officer or Director by a vote of at least two-thirds (2/3) for violating the Constitution or the Bylaws. The said Officer or Director shall have the right to appeal to the Appeals Committee within two (2) weeks after being informed of the Board’s decision.

Section 11.3 Any complaint against any Director concerning TCS operations shall be brought to the Chairman of the Board and be resolved by the Board. However, if the complaint

is against the Chairman of the Board, it shall be reported to the Principal and be resolved by the Board without the presence of the the Chairman of the Board.

Section 11.4 An Appeals Committee of five (5) non-Board Members shall be formed to hear the appeal of the expulsion of a member, the appeal of the removal of a Director or Administrative Officer, and any matter that cannot be resolved by the Board. In the case of an appeal only, three (3) of the five (5) members of this committee shall be recommended by the Board, and the other two (2) members shall be recommended by the individual bringing the appeal. Each side can object, but only once, to any particular member recommended by the other side in a appeal, in which case the other side shall recommend an alternate member to whom no objection shall be permitted. The chairman of the Appeals Committee shall be elected by its members.

Section 11.5 The decision of the Appeals Committee is final.

## ARTICLE 12 MEETING AND QUORUM

Section 12.1 English shall be the language of choice in all Board Meetings, and all Board Meeting minutes shall be written in English. Discussions can be carried out in Chinese; however, when these discussions need to be recorded in the meeting minutes, they shall be translated into English to be deemed as official.

Section 12.2 In all other TCS meetings or activities, Chinese may be used as an alternate language. Anyone who spoke or made written statements in Chinese at any meeting or activity on any important issues that require record keeping shall be required to provide his/her own English translation if requested by a non-Chinese speaking member. A TCS Director, or an Officer shall always try to make the interpretation but is not responsible for the validity of the translation.

Section 12.3 In addition to the Annual Meeting, general membership meeting can be called either by members with signatures from at least twenty (20) percent of the general membership or by the Board with a vote of least two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board. All meeting announcements shall be in writing and distributed at least two (2) weeks in advance to the membership by the Board.

Section 12.4 A financial statement and a summary of significant activities of TCS shall be presented and posted by the Chairman of the Board or his/her designee(s) at the Annual Meeting.

Section 12.5 Any membership meeting shall have at least twenty-five (25) percent of members present to constitute a quorum.

Section 12.6 The Board shall hold at least one (1) Board Meeting every month during the school year and may convene additional meetings if necessary. Five (5) or more Directors present shall constitute a quorum.

Section 12.7 A simple majority of the Administrative Officers shall constitute a quorum for the Administrative Meeting.

Section 12.8 A two-thirds (2/3) majority votes shall be required to pass motions related to financial matters with values over \$500, any personnel issues, and regulations considered in the Board Meeting.

Section 12.9 "Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised," when not inconsistent with these Bylaws, shall govern the meetings of the members and of the Board.

### ARTICLE 13 **LIMITATION OF LIABILITY, INDEMNIFICATION AND INSURANCE**

Section 13.1 To the fullest extent that the Virginia Corporation Act, as it exists on the effective date hereof or it may hereafter be amended, permits the limitation or elimination of the liability of Directors or Officers of TCS in any proceeding brought by or on behalf of TCS, and provided that a Director or Officer shall not have engaged in (i) any breach of his/her duty of loyalty to TCS, (ii) acts or omissions not in good faith or that involve willful misconduct or a knowing violation of law, or (iii) any transactions from which the Director or Officer derived an improper or personal benefit, then such Director or Officer shall not be liable to TCS for monetary damages.

Section 13.2 To the fullest extent permitted and in the manner prescribed by the Virginia Corporation Act and any other applicable law, TCS shall indemnify against all liability incurred in a proceeding (and advance reasonable attorneys' fees to) any Director or Officer of TCS who is, was, or is threatened to be made a party to any such threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding (whether civil, criminal, administrative, arbitral or investigative), including an action by or on behalf of TCS by reason of the fact that he/she is or was such a Director or Officer or is or was serving at the request of TCS as Director, Officer, employee, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, employee benefit plan, or other enterprise. The Board of Directors is empowered, by a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested directors, to contract in advance to indemnify any director or Officer.

Section 13.3 TCS may purchase and maintain insurance to indemnify it against the whole or any portion of the liability assumed by it in accordance with this Article and may also procure insurance, in such amounts as the Board of Directors may determine, on behalf of any person who is or was a Director, Officer, or agent of another corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, employee benefit plan, or other enterprise, against any liability asserted against or incurred by such person in any such capacity or arising from his/her status as such, whether or not TCS would have power to indemnify him against such liability under the provision of this Article.

### ARTICLE 14 **NO CONFLICT**

If, at any time, there is any inconsistency or conflict between these Bylaws and the provisions of the Code of Virginia, as the same may be amended from time to time, the contrary

provisions of the Code of Virginia shall take precedence over and govern the conduct of TCS. Wherever these Bylaws do not cover a particular situation, the applicable provisions of the Code of Virginia shall apply with the same force and effect set forth herein.

## ARTICLE 15 DISSOLUTION

TCS may be dissolved by both a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board and a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership. Upon dissolution, all properties and assets shall be donated to other charitable or not-for-profit organizations designated by the majority vote of the membership after provision for payment of all liabilities have been made.

## ARTICLE 16 AMENDMENT

Section 16.1 Proposals to amend the Constitution or Bylaws may be made by the Board or by a petition signed by at least twenty (20) percent of members. The Board shall then send the proposal(s) to all members in writing one (1) month before the Annual Meeting. A special membership meeting may be called to discuss the proposed amendment(s) before presentation at the Annual Meeting, if requested by a petition signed by at least twenty (20) percent of members.

Section 16.2 An affirmative vote of two-thirds (2/3) of all valid ballots received from voting members at an Annual Meeting shall be necessary for the adoption of any amendment to the Constitution, while a majority vote is needed for amending the Bylaws.

Section 16.3 Any amendment approved by the membership at the Annual Meeting shall take effect immediately after its adoption unless otherwise indicated in the amendment.

## ARTICLE 17 SPECIAL CLAUSE

The terms of the transitional board members elected before June 30, 2010 will expire on June 30, 2010. Their terms will not be counted as the term of the board as specified in the Article 5. This article will automatically be dismissed after July 1, 2010.

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1. The TCS Bylaws was initially adopted by the general membership meeting on February 9, 1991.
  2. The amendment to Article 3, the first paragraph, was unanimously passed, on 1/19/01 by the Board of Directors (names and titles are herein omitted)
  3. The current amended version was presented to a General Membership meeting and passed for adoption on December 19, 2009.