

## **Student Voices: Ohio Student Congress**

### **STUDENT #1**

*What will you be doing that everybody else in the committee won't be doing?*

### **STUDENT #2**

*I'll talk about outside community outreach.*

### **STUDENT #3**

*That is we have to get them more involved and let them know what they are getting themselves into.*

### **ERIN DEGNAN, *the.News* Student correspondent:**

High School Students in Columbus, Ohio have put their study of the United States Constitution to use by creating a Student Congress. Through the student congress, they have learned how decisions about their schools are made and what they can do to get involved in local government.

### **CHYNA BOSEMAN, Africentric School:**

We are the Senior Senate for Columbus Public Schools.

### **MARCUS SIMMS, Mifflin High School:**

And it's basically put together, you know, so that kids can have a say so in the community.

### **ERIN DEGNAN:**

The Columbus Student Congress is modeled after the U.S. Congress. It has a House and Senate, with proportional representation based on enrollment and grade level. Details were hammered out over the school year during day long constitutional conventions.

### **CHYNA BOSEMAN:**

We basically are putting together a constitution for the Columbus Public Schools and it's going to help to create more of a bond between the board of education and the students.

### **MARCUS SIMMS, Mifflin High School:**

I just want to be a positive role model and change, you know, the thought that people have about Columbus Public students.

### **ERIN DEGNAN:**

Following the model of the U.S. Congress, the students worked in committees to develop the legislative procedures.

### **STUDENT #4:**

*You need a two-thirds vote of the senate to pass the resolution... which that resolution will be presented to the board.*

### **TRISTEN HALL, Columbus Alternative High School:**

One of our purposes and our goals, like I said, is to give the students voice in the district as far as decisions are made as far as, you know, like on district policies. We want to give input on budgets and like different things like that. We're going to be represented at all the school board meetings.

**ERIN DEGNAN:**

The final document, created by the students, was presented to the Columbus School Board this May. It outlines the structure of the Student Congress and includes a student bill of rights.

**GENE T. HARRIS, School Superintendent:**

*Tonight, I have asked members of the Columbus Public Schools Student Congress to attend our meeting.*

**JAZMINE JOYCE, Eastmoor High School:**

*We the Student Congress of the Columbus Public Schools, in order to help the process of decision making by providing a common voice for the student population, are creating a forum that will give our prospective on issues, provide feedback on how decisions affect students. Article One, Section Two. The Senate will work to gather information, reactions to the issues, opinions, consensus and ideas from the building assembly representatives at the school which he or she is enrolled, will gather information, reactions to issues, opinions, consensus and ideas, and interact with the representatives. They will also bring building assembly issues from their school to the general meeting of the entire Senate.*

**MARCUS SIMMS, Mifflin High School:**

It makes me feel great that we finally got the constitution signed and next year everything should be up and running, and we are the first members to start something like this.

**ERIN DEGNAN:**

As a result of the students work, the School Board voted to put the student constitution into effect. Next year, the students will have a non-voting seat on the Board, giving them a voice in decisions.

**TRISTEN HALL, Columbus Alternative High School:**

We always learned about the constitution in school but I never really... I guess appreciated it or understood how different people interpret different concepts until we actually got here and I saw that different people did try to, you know, put their own different styles into it.

**JAZMINE JOYCE:**

We are always learning about the different features of the U.S. Constitution and that really helped with creating this constitution, because if you read both of them, they are somewhat similar. We have a preamble, we have articles and sections, and we also have a bill of rights. So, it was really helpful learning about the U.S. constitution and implementing those features into our own constitution.

**TRISTEN HALL:**

*Let me just say after seven months of hard work our constitution is finally done. We are finally established, we are an established group. We are the Student Congress of Columbus Public Schools and we are very proud of the work we have been doing for the past seven months.*

**ERIN DEGNAN:**

Do you have a voice in decisions made in your school district? Consider how these students found a voice in school governance. How can your class approach a similar challenge? Be sure to check the research tools online at [www.student-voices.org](http://www.student-voices.org). To learn more about our U.S. Constitution, visit [www.justicelearning.org](http://www.justicelearning.org). I'm Erin Degnan for Student Voices and *the.News*.