

So, you're a class advisor. This may be a position you sought, but more than likely it is a duty that has been thrust upon you. You are quite likely young, without tenure, and poorly prepared for this task. Hopefully this manual will help to make your experience as class advisor a successful and rewarding one. This document mirrors my expertise. In other words there's a lot about general advisor knowledge, very specific information regarding float building and prom. There is far less regarding post prom and post graduation activities. Those may be areas that can be elaborated upon by future class advisors.

In a perfect world, you will be the class advisor for four years, helping to guide students in the door as freshmen and out the door as graduates. Depending on your approach, this experience can be drudgery or it can be one of your more enjoyable educational adventures.

### **Here is the simplest big picture breakdown.**

Freshman year- 1. Hold elections for class officers (if necessary)

2. Build a float (fall football homecoming)
3. Raise funds (see explanation and ideas)
4. Help your officers to organize their classes' homecoming activities (winter and fall)
5. Develop a relationship with your class

Sophomore year 1. Build a float

2. Raise funds (if necessary)
3. Help officers to organize their classes' homecoming activities (winter and fall)
4. Begin planning for Prom- location and date is best booked 1 year in advance.  
Sophomore representatives attend prom free and work taking tickets and doing other tasks with the idea that they see first hand what needs to be done.

Junior year- 1. Build float

2. Raise funds (hopefully not necessary at this point)
3. Help officers to organize class activities (winter and fall)
4. Prom planning is a year long activity/ post prom party? (see prom manual)
5. Plan and pay for senior breakfast at end of year

Senior year- 1. Build your last float

2. Help students to design and buy "senior shirts"
3. Help officers to plan graduation/ post graduation party?
4. Help officers organize homecoming activities (fall and winter)
5. Help officers to organize any "senior only" activities. Movie nights, etc.
6. Organize a committee to pick what seniors can perform at graduation. Normally, one or two sing the national anthem, and another one or two perform during the ceremony. These "tryouts" can be quite competitive and sometimes divisive. There are limited spots and some classes have a lot of musical talent. You will want good "music people" on the committee.

**Here is a more complex breakdown of yearly obligations. An extensive breakdown of float building and prom follows this section.**

## **Freshman year**

1. You need to see that **class officers** are chosen. **Our current policy is to have 8<sup>th</sup> graders vote in the spring for their freshmen representatives.** This policy could change in a moment; so your job is to simply see that you have elected officers in place. The task may fall completely on you. If it does, encourage participation; try not to let things become divisive. The student government advisor can help you with this. Let people who show an interest but do not win know that you may seek their help on various committees that will be organized as needed. It is probably best to duplicate the process used in the spring to elect the other classes' officers. Your officers help organized fundraising activities. They also make sure your class is represented in the various homecoming activities and competitions. Sometimes the advisor has get in the class rooms to get freshmen fired up if volunteers are lagging.
2. **Meet your class-** if you do not teach freshmen, use your prep period to seek the freshmen out, introduce yourself, tell them you'll be building a float together soon. Come to the initial freshman class meeting; in fact, try to come to every Freshman class meeting that is called even if you have nothing to do with what is going on at that meeting.
3. Homecoming **float building** will provide the first big commitment from you. In many ways this event will set the tone for your entire relationship with this class. **Specific rules posted later in the more extensive discussion of float building.**
  - Big picture (there will be much more specific info and tips for building later)
  - a. **Secure a location ASAP.** It should be large enough to have work areas and tall enough to build a good sized float. Floats can be 16' tall from ground to top. Inspect the site yourself, or visit with a committee. In a perfect world the site would be close to school and close to Brooklyn so you don't have to haul the float too far. Additionally, secluded sites are the most desirable. Pole barns set back away from the road are best. But often times "beggars can't be choosey." Very good floats have been built and hauled great distances for the parade.
  - b. Try to get materials donated and dropped off at site. Cardboard and any scrap wood (material lists in larger float section)
  - c. **Get a trailer.** Traditionally floats are built on hay wagons, but recently all kinds of trailers have been used. It is best if you can get a commitment to use the same trailer for four years. That way certain parts of the float can be used again from year to year.
  - d. Set a work schedule and provide to kids. If you can't be there at certain times, make sure parents have signed up to cover that time.
  - e. What freshman lack in experience they make up for in excitement and sheer numbers. They are easily motivated. Freshman classes can and do win.

- f. Try to secure storage to save as much of the float as you can, especially the sides. As your students get older, they will have less and less time to work on floats. Anything you can use over from year to year will be extremely helpful later.
- g. Get a “builder.” A parent or two who know how to build things is absolutely essential.
- h. Have a plan. As Freshmen, you will have last choice. You’ll need to have several ideas kicking around. Inexperienced float builders will have great and grandiose ideas, but you will need to keep them practical. If you look through the section on how to build a float, you’ll see what is practical and what is not. Building big things, houses, boats, even cars, is not hard. Building people, like superman or spiderman, is very, very difficult. The number one question with regards to float ideas is, “What are we capable of building.” Everyone loves Spiderman, but what are you going to build? Classes also get too preoccupied with the slogan. The slogan can be an afterthought. You will win or lose on the merit of what you build.
- i. If you are well organized and get the kids to turn out, it is entirely possible to get 95% of your project done on opening weekend. Your “artisans” can finish the last 5% over the next week.
- j. **Try to build relationships with parents.** These are the same people who can help you now, and help you later with prom and project graduation. They can provide food for a snack table.
- k. Someone, usually the junior or senior advisor, will order the tissue paper that most of us use to cover the bulk of our float. If you can afford it, it is better to have too much tissue than too little. You can keep any leftover tissue to use next year. **Lists of specific materials that are needed and general techniques in building are discussed in the more extensive analysis of float building later in this document.**

**Fundraising-** There are different schools of thought on this. We’ve had classes do very little fundraising and classes that ran a fundraiser every year. We even had a class or two simply collect class dues of \$10 and do no fundraising. (Different administrations may frown on this approach). Generally speaking, having money is nice. You have cash to buy hotdogs or pizza at float building. You can spend the max budget putting together an awesome float. You can provide money to offset the cost of post proms and post graduation events.

Float costs for 4 years- \$600 to \$ 1600 (by rule you cannot spend more than \$400 per year. It’s almost impossible to not incur some costs in float building )

Deposit for prom site - \$500-\$1,000 (you will eventually recoup this cost through prom ticket sales)

Senior shirts - \$1,200 to \$1,500 (if the class pays for it, then everyone gets one and you don’t have to hound people to pay for their shirt. By the same token, some classes don’t have the money and seniors buy their own shirts)

Juniors pay for and put on the senior breakfast- 2017 cost for an outside caterer was \$4.50 per senior.

Prom is a guaranteed money maker. No one should ever lose money on prom. You do need money to put down deposits for venue or other contract employees,

You could present ideas to your class and have them vote on what kind of fundraiser they want to do.

Little Caesar's Pizza kits are a good sales item. We are fortunate to have MIS in our back yard and the fundraising opportunities there are plentiful. I have often thought that if the freshmen advisor was decided upon early enough, 8<sup>th</sup> graders could direct the parking on race day. They ask for 30 people and pay \$1,400. 8<sup>th</sup> graders are excited about coming to the high school and I think it would be easy to get 20 kids and 10 adults. Do both races and you have \$2,800. You'll never need any more than that unless you have some specific grandiose plan. **As kids get older, fundraising gets harder.** Nothing is sadder than a junior class running "bake sales" trying to get cash flow to put down deposits for prom obligations. A class that ends up with a lot of money can use it for post prom activities. **Classes do not get to take money with them. They cannot use it for a five year reunion, for instance.** Undesignated left over money ends up in the school general fund. One advisor took left over money and gave each of the lower classes \$400. I've often thought that a donation to a permanent "prom fund" would be helpful. Classes could borrow money from the prom fund with the idea that they would pay it back from prom profits.

**Misc-** there will be miscellaneous class activities- food drives, homecoming competitions, and the like. Make sure your officers are staying on top of these things and you may need to occasionally help fire your kids up to compete and make a good showing.

## Sophomore year

Everything from freshman year still applies with the possible exception of fundraising.

The big thing you have to do is **pick the site for next year's prom**- get on this early. Have a committee to explore places and ideas. Some popular places must be reserved a full year in advance. Check with spring coaches about what dates should be avoided. Using the corresponding date from the most recent prom is often a good idea. There is much more info in the "Prom section" of this packet. Generally speaking, you'd like a site that looks good to begin with, it will need less decorating to feel elegant. See if there are any strings attached to the site you are interested in; for instance, if you want food or snacks, as some sites require that you use their caterer. You will need to put down a deposit of \$500 to \$1,000 to hold your site.

Your sophomore officers are expected to work at prom so that they may see firsthand how things can be done.

## Junior year

## Float

**Fundraise-** (as needed)

**Prom-Prom-and more Prom-** The portion of this packet that covers prom in detail will give you much more info. The short version is that you must get going on this early- you'll need several committees to help make specific decisions. Now is the time to take advantage of the parent relationships you've developed. The people who step up to lead these committees may or may not be your class officers. The more input you get from students, the less criticism you'll get at the end of it all. Although I can tell you, one of the best proms I supervised was literally done by two girls. The next year the juniors were doing such a poor job of organizing the prom, the same two girls stepped up and planned the whole thing again.

**Post prom activity-** this is most often a parent/community driven effort. Not every class does one, but they are popular events that can be well attended. More specific information will be developed later in this packet.

**Senior Breakfast-** This is not a huge responsibility. Normally, just give the seniors a brunch menu list provided by the kitchen staff. They choose the items that they want served on that morning . Juniors pay for the event and normally decorate the library (where the meal is held) to make it look nice. Some classes have had the event catered by people not associated with the school food services.

Depending how early fall homecoming is, you may want to start a "senior shirt" committee. It's nice to have the shirts on hand for homecoming senior year.

## Senior year

### Last float

**"Senior only" activities-** not all classes do this, but class activities like "movie night" in the library can be organized. As advisor, you'd be expected to attend to supervise. Bowling nights have been planned. This is clearly extra- not mandatory, but some of the best organized classes do these things.

**Senior shirts-** the best plan is to have shirts designed and printed to be **handed out the day before blue and gold day of fall homecoming**. It pretty much guarantees that the seniors win blue and gold day. Also, by being organized and getting the shirts out early, seniors have their "senior shirts" to use all year long. It is always normal for students to sign the design inside the block numbers of their graduation year. Watch them sign so they are not writing some juvenile obscenity. Make sure everyone signs. Every year someone gets left off, usually because officers were hurrying to get the order in. Plan ahead and everything should go well. **This probably should be the first project you undertake at the**

**start of senior year.** Like everything else, if you offer students design and color ideas to vote on you will have less squabbling. If you can afford it, order a few extra and keep them around to be sold to students who lose or damage theirs. If you have leftovers, give them to the teachers or administrators who have been most helpful to your class. As advisor you should have a shirt and you should wear it proudly. By now you are a part of this class.

**Graduation-** Administration generally takes the lead on this and at some point asks for student input- Our graduation ceremony is pretty consistent from year to year. The class gets to decide who will be their "guest speaker." This is usually, though not always, a teacher, often, though not always, the class advisor. The class is responsible for coming up with a system to pick seniors who will perform at graduation. Do not take this lightly. You will need strong adults who know what quality performances look like to help the student representatives make good decisions. Some classes have an abundance of musical talent, some don't. While most student performances are exceptional, there have been more than a couple of embarrassingly poor efforts from people who should never have been allowed to perform. Those incidents happened when the selection board was made up predominately of students who didn't have the heart to tell a friend that she was a poor singer. Developing a criteria sheet might be helpful.

### **Class budget for four years- have the students help to make a plan**

Here is the budget for the class of 2006. You will notice how things have changed. The two biggest items on this budget are no longer expenses. The freshmen were voting on how to proceed. They were one of the first classes to require graduates to buy their own caps and gowns. If you can get the freshmen to be invested in the process, you'll have more success.

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Expected expenses for graduation

Prom -	\$ 0
Caps and gowns	\$4,500 (Approx \$40 each)
Color pictures in yearbook	\$2,000
Misc expenses	\$1,000
Optional expense- Tee-shirts	\$850

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

Do you want to get color pictures? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Do you believe that we should keep track of who helps to raise funds and if a person raises no funds then that person should pay for his own cap and gown?

\_\_\_\_\_yes No \_\_\_\_\_

Check the following if they apply to you

\_\_\_\_\_ I can work at the track (program sales)

\_\_\_\_\_ I would rather do a different fundraiser

\_\_\_\_\_ I will not do a fundraiser even if it means I will have to buy my own cap and gown,

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This document above is a good example of how you get the class involved with the decision making. They all believe in democracy. They will go with the majority. Again, most of the items in this budget do not even apply anymore, but the idea of soliciting input and making a four year plan as freshmen is a good one.

Here is a document from the class of 2003 that was put out at the beginning of their junior year.

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Graduation costs (Class of 2003)

Flowers	\$300	
Caps and gowns	\$3,000	
Color pictures for yearbook	\$2,000	
Senior luncheon		\$300
Tee-shirts for our senior year	<u>\$1,500</u>	
		\$7,100
Current assets	<u>\$5,300</u>	
	-\$1,800 (shortage)	

notes

We are the wealthiest class in the school, even so, we have some decisions.

- Paying for color pictures in the yearbook is a recent cost that most graduating seniors have not had to pay. Black and white pictures have been normal. Only recently have seniors paid to get their pictures in color. The current seniors have voted to have color pictures and are now trying to get the money for it.
- Not all senior classes have custom tee-shirts and most that do have the seniors pay for them individually. (usually about \$10)
- Door prizes at prom are a recent phenomena. Last year they spent \$2,400 on a variety of prizes including dvd players and big screen t.v.'s. Keep in mind that only a few of the 245 ticket holders actually got prizes. We have currently budgeted \$1,000 for door prizes and plan to give out about 30 prizes valued at \$25-\$50. We can lower ticket costs and do away with this cost.
- Prom is normally a break even proposition. It is really unethical to host a prom for the seniors then make money on the effort. Last year's pro ran a budget of \$8,000. They sold 245 tickets at \$30 each and lost \$635. Our current budget is set at \$5,300 (This includes \$1,000 for door prizes). To break even at 225 tickets, we would charge \$25. If we sold more than 225 tickets we would have a slight profit that we could put back into door prizes or other prom activity. We may be able to make budget cuts to get the price down to \$20. We could charge the same thing that last year's juniors charged, \$30, and really splurge. We could even afford a post prom party at some place like Lenawee Christian where they have pools, bowling alleys, basketball or handball courts.

We need you to answer some questions so that we can get an idea of what kind of prom you want to have and how you want to spend our money. Please be thoughtful when considering your answer.

Please respond to these prom and class expenditure questions

	Strongly Agree					Strongly Disagree
Have a fundraiser to raise \$1,800	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
No color picture in yearbook	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Individuals pay for own tee-shirts	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
No senior shirts at all			_____	_____	_____	_____
Offer prom tickets at lowest price Possible, cut the door prize budget Out (\$1000)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Offer prom tickets at \$25, keep the \$1,000 door prize budget.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Offer prom tickets at \$30 each, boost The door prize budget, splurge.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	
Have a post prom all night party Somewhere. (details later)	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	

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Like the previous document, this one has costs listed that we no longer worry about, but it is a good example of soliciting input and putting ideas up for a vote.

## **Prom- everything you could ever want to know.**

**Rule 1 and 2 and 3- Don't sign anything unless you are in fact agreeing to pay for a specific service. DJ's, photographers and even caterers can trick you into signing a contract by calling**



**it something else. Unless you have in fact decided to contract with someone- DON'T SIGN ANYTHING.**

Big picture check list (some things may not apply to your specific plan; for instance, parents might cater or even decorate)

1. You'll need a folder that is subdivided into the following categories: budget, hall, photographer, DJ, decorations, keepsakes, security, chaperones/valet parking.
2. Make committees
3. Get a venue in the spring of sophomore year
4. Choose a theme, usually in coordination with your decorator.
5. Get a DJ, photographer, decorator, caterer as soon as is reasonably possible, usually early in junior year.
6. Order or plan for mementos, order crown for kings and tiara for the queen (sometimes scepters and flowers are given too)
7. get chaperones

**Budget-** How you want to spend your money is pretty arbitrary I've seen classes spend huge amounts on DJ's who bring in fancy monitors, lights, and even a cotton candy and snow cone machine. Others spend huge amounts on decorations and photo booths, Here is a post prom survey that tells how the class of 2003 spent their money

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Prom Survey

To the juniors: Great job! Everything went as planned and we were never at each others throats. Thanks to all committee chairmen. Special thanks to Katie Johnson, Lyndsey Psychas, and Erin Hehl who did so much with decorations and mementos. Also thanks to Heather Baughey for making the arrangements for the photographer, and to Nichole Rider who did all the work in getting the D.J. I know there are more people who helped, as usual this was a class effort. I will be getting thank you notes out to all the parents who were so helpful to us

To the seniors: We hope you had a great time and ask that you take a couple minutes to fill out this form so we can pass this information along to next year's prom committee.

Thanks for your time and effort,

Quinn Guernsey

Junior Class President

Please check the appropriate class

\_\_\_\_\_ sophomore

\_\_\_\_\_ junior

\_\_\_\_\_ senior

How many proms have you attended? \_\_\_ one \_\_\_ two \_\_\_ three \_\_\_ four

Prom is a break-even proposition. What you get, you paid for. Please answer these questions to help us evaluate our prom and to give direction to next year's prom committee.

\$8 of your ticket cost went to mementos (key chain and magic picture cube)

- \_\_\_\_\_ They were worth the cost
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would have preferred a less expensive memento
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would rather have had no memento and saved \$8.
- \_\_\_\_\_ other, explain \_\_\_\_\_

\$7.50 of your ticket cost went to the D.J. (cotton candy and snow cones were his too.)

- \_\_\_\_\_ D.J. was worth the cost
- \_\_\_\_\_ I would have preferred a cheaper D.J.
- \_\_\_\_\_ a \$300 D.J. would have been fine
- \_\_\_\_\_ I don't mind an expensive D.J., but this one was not worth it.
- \_\_\_\_\_ other, explain- \_\_\_\_\_

\$7.50 of your ticket cost went to rent the hall, pay the caterer, and decorations  
Hall (\$300)

- \_\_\_\_\_ The hall was nice
- \_\_\_\_\_ The hall was just OK
- \_\_\_\_\_ I did not like the hall
- \_\_\_\_\_ other, explain \_\_\_\_\_

Decorations (\$1000)

- \_\_\_\_\_ The decorations were great
- \_\_\_\_\_ They should have had more decorations
- \_\_\_\_\_ They didn't need to spend so much on the decorations
- \_\_\_\_\_ other, explain \_\_\_\_\_

\$4 of your ticket went to gift certificates for the King and Queen ( two at \$25)

- Best dresses (two at \$25)
- Best dancer (two at \$25)
- 11 gift certificates at \$10
- 5 gift certificates at \$20
- 3 gift certificates at \$50
- 3<sup>rd</sup> prize at \$75
- 2<sup>nd</sup> prize at \$125
- 1<sup>st</sup> prize at \$300

- \_\_\_\_\_ door prizes were great

\_\_\_\_\_ I would rather have kept my \$4 and had none  
\_\_\_\_\_ Fewer less expensive prizes would have been better  
\_\_\_\_\_ other, explain \_\_\_\_\_

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We could have offered a buffet dinner at the same hall for about \$10 a person.(like weddings do)

\_\_\_\_\_ I would have wanted to do that if given the option  
\_\_\_\_\_ I would have been willing to do the buffet, if others wanted and if the buffet was good  
\_\_\_\_\_ I would rather have gone to a restaurant of my choice

Cost breakdown for prom

Momentos-	\$2,000	D.J.	\$1,900	Hall	\$300	Caterer	\$500	Decorations	\$1,000
Prizes	\$1,000	total budget-			6,700				

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What we learned from the above survey. 1. They like their door prizes. 2. They like going out to dinner on their own. 3. They had a positive experience at this prom. 4. Mementos were OK, some people thought we spent too much of our budget on them. 5. Complaints were minimal

Here is a form sent out by the class of 2006 attempting to fill prom committees

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Dear Class of 2006,

As some of you may know the prom is quickly approaching for this year, and as we have to have prom next year we need to start thinking of where, when, who will be our DJ, and what we will give as prizes. Here are some committees we are going to start as **soon** as we get back from spring break. If you would like to be on one of these committees please write your name on the line next to the committee you want to be on. You can be on more than one but please be aware that it will take much more work to be on two committees. Be listening for announcements over the PA on Tuesdays and Thursday s.

DJ \_\_\_\_\_  
Location \_\_\_\_\_  
Food and Drink \_\_\_\_\_  
Prizes \_\_\_\_\_  
Mementoes \_\_\_\_\_  
Decorations \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for your time  
and trust in your officers this year,  
Kelsey, Joelle, Andrew, Jayme

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Here is another prom budget- very different from the budget used by '02 class.

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Last year's general prom budget	
DJ-	\$300
Rental	\$1,000
Food and drink	\$300
Prizes	\$2,400
Momentos	\$2,200
Decorations	\$1,800
Total cost	\$8,000

245 tickets sold at \$30= \$7,350  
Total loss on prom \$650

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Here is a budget from 2016

Photographer-	\$620.00
D.J and photo booth-	\$700.00
Venue	\$425.00
Caterer	\$635.55
Total	\$2,380.55

(this budget did not include mementoes or door prizes or decorations)

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## Where do I start?

Location- find a place a year ahead of time. If you are going to try something that's never been done before (river boat cruise, frontier city) make sure you get student input and try to talk to a school that has done it in the past. A google search for Prom locations in Jackson area will give you most good options. You'll want to go see the place. Ideally, you'd like a place that requires as little decorating as possible. Some places look elegant as they are, and others need more attention if they are to be prom appropriate.

As of 2018- these are good, well established locations.

Jackson Community College- great venue- long walk to parking lot- must use their caterer

Sauk Valley- great venue- easy to decorate- multiple spaces for activities

Ella Sharp museum- was very nice when we used- classy and elegant- close parking plenty of room

Commonwealth building- well established for weddings and proms- does require decorating

Cascades Manor House- beautiful venue- a little tight inside and party is split up by structural divisions.

Adrian College

**Budget-** earlier in this section there were sample budgets. In some ways you can simply decide how much you want to spend and then adjust the ticket prices to pay the bills. It is perfectly acceptable to turn a small profit from prom, \$200-\$400 is fine and can be used to pay for senior breakfast at the end of the school year. It is really unethical to turn a larger profit than that. You can start with a budget you think is reasonable and then shop for the contract employees that will meet your cost needs. More often, you may find a DJ you really like. He provides a bunch of cool accessories to his act, monitors, lights, snow cone machines, but he charges \$1,700 a night. That's a lot. You can get a good DJ for a third of that cost. But this is prom; it's not just another dance. If you want a \$1,700 DJ to make the night special and memorable, then budget \$1,700. Proms are not supposed to be cheap. In fact, when the night is done, ticket prices are probably just a small part of most people's overall expense. You do not want to put on a "cheap" prom. How do you guarantee a profit? Door prizes are your flexible budget item. Door prizes are usually bought on the day before prom. If you sold fewer tickets than expected, cut the door prize budget. If you sold more than expected, then you can spend more on door prizes. By the time tickets go on sale you will have contracted everyone necessary to make your prom a success. Simply price your tickets at a level that will pay the bills. **Keep all receipts and make a copy of all receipts.**

**Theme-** You will need a theme. Have kids vote from a menu of ideas. "A Night in Paris", "New York, New York," whatever spurs their interest. Prom books will mysteriously begin to appear in your mailbox. Have your committees look through them, not necessarily to buy, (prices can be outrageous), but to get ideas. Your theme will impact your decorations, your tickets, and maybe mementos. I have always found this aspect of the prom to be overblown in importance, though some of your kids may think this is the most important decision they have to make. . **It might be practical to ask your decorator (if you go that route) what are some good themes that he or she can provide. Many decorators have a menu of themes available to you.**

**DJ-** prices vary wildly. I know of one prom when the DJ got in a car wreck and didn't show up. At the last second, the juniors put on their own music and had a great prom. (turned an enormous profit too). You should go listen to any DJ's you are considering. You do want to get your DJ locked up. Many require a substantial deposit. There are many services offered by various DJ companies, some you might not expect. But, just because they offer a service, doesn't mean you'll want to get it from them. Shop around and check prices. Sometimes a third party can come in and do that extra thing the DJ offered for much less. Get a DJ who will cover a large spectrum of music, fast-slow-rock-pop-country. Accept up front that no DJ is going to please everyone. Some DJ's will ask for a "play list." Again, if you give kids a chance to offer input, they complain far less at the end.

**Photographer-** Photographers vary wildly in their costs. Shop around. **Don't sign anything unless you are committing to contract with that person. There's no need to "sign an estimate."**

here's a recent photographer's bill from April, 2016

Payment terms half down. Balance before event

Plastic traditional keychains	190 attendees x \$6 =	\$1,140
Set up fee		\$200
	Total	\$1,1600

The photographer is of course available to take additional pictures as needed but that is between the photographer and the individual clients. By paying to have everyone's picture taken for the key chain, the class provides a great memento, and provides the service of a photographer to those who may want it. Photo booths are very popular. Sometimes the DJ provides this service, sometimes the photographer has one, and occasionally a third party provides the photo booth. As with everything, check costs. The last prom I did, we found a photo booth option from a third party that considerably undercut the prices of both the DJ and photographer we hired. Just because you contract with someone for one service does not mean you are obligated to have them do another.

**Caterer-** the biggest reality regarding food is that for the most part, **kids are not hungry**. They do build up a thirst and punch bowls are constantly being depleted. It is very difficult to have too many beverages on hand, but I have seen many examples of too much food. Finger foods and small snacks are the best options. Late night pizza might be welcome. Some sites may require you to use their caterer. The best caterer I ever used was a mom who charged us at cost. One year, the DJ provided a snow cone machine and a cotton candy machine. The kids loved it. Who doesn't like cotton candy? And the snow cones really helped cool down the overheated dancers. **Chaperones may be hungry**. If you can arrange a chaperone room with sub sandwiches or other foods, your adult helpers will appreciate it greatly. Just make sure you have enough adults to be able to rotate break times.

**Decorations-** for the first four proms I had a hand in, we did all our own decorating. I got out of the business for a while and when I returned, the new trend was to hire decorators. It was, in my opinion a brilliant move. When a class decorates for prom, it is the same kids always doing the work, and when the party is over someone has to stay and clean up. Professional decorators are reasonably priced, and they clean most everything up. It's far easier on kids and parents. In my early days of helping plan proms, we spent outrageous amounts of money on decorations, (\$700 on a balloon tree alone). You can choose to decorate yourself; some classes like it, and some venues are elegant enough to require very little decorating to begin with. If you decorate yourself, you'll need to rent linens. Sometimes the venue will rent you things you need, but you should be willing to shop around.

**Prizes and mementos-**Prom magazines are full of options for mementos. Watch your budget as these things can get expensive. You will need to order a crown and tiara for the king and queen. The keychain photograph which is provided by most all photographers is a popular and appreciated memento. The

ticket is a memento of sorts, as are any goofy pictures taken at the photo booth that most proms make available. Your class may want to try something else to be different, but most trinkets you buy from magazines are basically overpriced junk. Door prizes are popular. Gas cards, restaurant cards, gift cards, and latest games or devices are all. You can budget a certain amount for this with the expectation of selling a certain number of tickets. If you sell fewer tickets than expected, then cut this budget. These are the prizes given by the class of 2003.

King and Queen (two cards at \$25)  
Best dressed (one boy, one girl) (two at \$25)  
Best dancer (one boy, one girl) (two at \$25)  
11 gift certificates at \$10  
5 gift certificates at \$20  
3 gift certificates at \$50  
3<sup>rd</sup> prize at \$75  
2<sup>nd</sup> prize at \$125  
1<sup>st</sup> prize at \$300

The King and queen receive crowns and such, it may be redundant to give them gift cards too. The 24 prizes awarded by random draw were awarded throughout the night and announced two or three at a time by the DJ. Winners needed to be present to win. The three gift certificates at \$50 along with the top three prizes were awarded at the end of the night to keep people at the dance. This is an impressive door prize list. It resulted from the fact they sold forty more tickets than they budgeted for. I went into Best Buy on Friday and said, "I need a \$75 gift, a \$125 gift, and \$300 gift. What do kids like?" You will need a system for registering everyone for door prizes. You could have them simply put their name on a small piece of paper when they check in. These papers would be thrown into a jar to be drawn out at different points throughout the night. Based on ticket sales you could put names on papers before people even arrive. (The more you can do before hand the better). People who pay at the door would need to added if this system was employed. There are probably a hundred ways to do this, but a system must be in place. **More recently I tried "buying locally."** Gas cards or certificates from local businesses were greatly appreciated by those who received them as well as by those who sold them. **It was very nice to be a school representative coming to a local business with cash in hand instead of looking for a handout.**

**Voting for king, queen-** you'll need a system for the voting process. If you have internet access at your site, people can vote at their leisure on chrome books. This is certainly the easiest, quickest, and most accurate way. If this is your plan, check and double check on the availability of internet. Paper ballots can work well; someone (usually a sophomore worker) will monitor the election, providing ballots and checking off people's names as they vote. A list of people who bought tickets will be at the door and a copy of that list would work for monitoring the election. Students can also vote for best dressed and best dancers, although at my proms the chaperones voted on those categories. The crowning of the king and queen is best done near the end of the night, but give them enough time to enjoy wearing their crowns while partying with their friends. .

**Sophomore workers-** These workers are indispensable. Generally the four sophomore officers are all you have to work, but six workers would be more helpful and would allow for rotation of duties so that

everyone gets time to enjoy the prom. These people will handle the tickets, oversee the voting, help implement the system for door prizes and really do anything needed to keep things going smoothly. They need to be the primary disseminators of information at the start of the night. Every student who checks in needs to know what is going on, what is free, and where things are available. If you have an abundance of parents, they can help in these areas too.

**Parents-** I sent out a letter one year asking parent to come to a meeting, and I had fourteen parents show up. It was great. It was my first prom and their advice, especially on decorations and valet parking, was very helpful. I had parents to help decorate and clean up afterwards. Another time I sent a letter out and no one came. Not one parent was interested. The kids did it all themselves. We used a decorator, and prom was great. Parent help is nice to have, but it is not a critical element if you have good student leaders.

**Tickets and ticket prices-** Selling tickets early, well before prom, gives your class cash flow and helps you to plan based on ticket sales. A graduated price scale that encourages early sales is a good idea, but no matter how high you make the final prices, it seems that people still buy at the door. A price scale that is overly punitive at the end punishes those kids who just have trouble scraping up the money.

**Ticket sales normally take place during both lunch hours over the six weeks before prom.**

Suggested price- Week 1 and 2    \$30

Week 3 and 4    \$35

Rest of the time    \$40

You could add an additional penalty of \$45 at the door, which would encourage people to buy at the latest on Friday the day before prom. You will have to make allowances for **career center kids and Options High School students** if they are allowed to attend. You could then use this money for more gift cards if all your other bills are covered. Money collected at the door is going to go to profit; there's nothing else you can do. Hopefully there will be very few students paying at the door. People who buy at the door have to be manually added to any lists you are keeping.

**Actual tickets** can be purchased from various magazines based on theme ideas. They can be surprisingly expensive. It is very possible that you will have students with the skill to create a suitable ticket that could be transferred to a heavy stock. (Possibly using career center technology). I would number the tickets and sell them in order by number. Keep track of who buys what tickets. Kids will forget their tickets and most proms recently have not required attendees to show their tickets. They are essentially a memento. Keep accurate records. My fear was that someone would show up without a ticket knowing we would let him or her in, but then someone would show up later and use that ticket to get in. You need accurate records to prevent this from happening. Know who bought tickets, and know what tickets they bought (by recording the ticket number).



**As with all dances, Columbia students bringing a guest from another school must register with appropriate paperwork through the high school office.**

**Chaperones-** staff members make good chaperones, advisors for the junior and senior class are expected to attend, often with their significant others. The high school principal, usually with spouse, will attend. A couple of parents are really all that is needed. Eight to ten adults total are all that is needed. If you have more, that is fine. That just gives people more break time

**Valet Parking-** Many proms do not plan for this, but it is a really nice thing for the students and is really very easy to organize. You'll need a mom or dad to take charge. Students pull up to the entrance, they are given a number that corresponds with a number attached to their key ring, Parents park the car and chart where in the parking lot the car was parked. Generally this service is open for the first hour, so it is not a huge time commitment from parents. Parents like doing this because they see all the kids dressed up and they get to park cool cars. One parent would have to stay to give keys back to students when they leave. Students give the number tag to the keeper of the keys who in turn returns the student's keys and tells the student where his or her car is parked. This is a very nice convenience for the students. **Parents with umbrellas on rainy nights are also greatly appreciated.**

**Traffic patterns at entrance-** You must have a pedestrian traffic plan when students begin to arrive. Students should report to a table near the main entrance to the dance. An Alphabetized list of all students who have bought tickets should be at the door. It is not worth the hassle for students to bring tickets. After you check off the names, move them towards the photographer who is waiting to take their picture for the free keychain memento. If students are putting their own names in the hat for the random drawings now would be a good time to have them do this. Your sophomore workers are the ones moving the students along, explaining what's going on at each step in the process. Make sure you have allocated enough space to keep the crowd moving. Your individual traffic pattern may be different than this one depending on your specific details of your prom. **The important thing is that you have a plan and plenty of people to offer direction and explanations.** Try to spread things out and keep things moving. People don't like to stand in line. If the photographer falls behind, people can choose to come back later. The important thing is that they know that their keychain is free. People miss out on things if the perks aren't explained clearly. When students arrive there must be a concerted effort to make sure that everyone understands how things work. "Your free memento key chain will be provided by the photographer." "This is where you can log on to vote for the King and Queen. Your vote must be placed before 10:00" "This is where you register to win the door prizes." "The photo booth will be set up here shortly. All pictures in the photo booth are free." Naturally, not all of these quotes may apply to your specific prom, but the need to inform is common to all events. There is nothing more disappointing to prom organizers as when a student didn't know how the voting worked or how the registering for prizes worked or that the key chains were free.

**Extras-** A really nice thing to do for the kids is to put bathroom baskets together: cologne, deodorant, mouthwash, breath mints, and any other items that might be needed. Safety pins, and sewing materials for the girls bathroom is always a good idea and is usually needed by some poor girl suffering a

wardrobe malfunction. A compassionate mother with some sewing skills might do a lot of good hanging around the girls' bathroom ready to help a young lady in need. This is not really expensive but should be part of your budget.

## Float building

Building floats is something we at Columbia are pretty good at, especially when compared to floats built by neighboring schools. This portion of the advisor's manual discusses how we do things at Columbia. These ideas are not the end all of float knowledge, but if you read through this section (or have your "builder" read through it), you will find that the task is more manageable than you might imagine. Online sources can be incredibly helpful.

For Freshman advisors, start planning very early, from day one. Discuss what needs to be done on first class meeting, even if homecoming is still weeks away.

1. Get a place to build
2. Get a wagon
3. Get a builder
4. Get materials
5. Get an idea
6. Get to work
7. Put on a show
8. Take it apart

**Place to build**- This is an important element. Get a committee to help decide and be sure that as advisor you actually see it for yourself. Once I trusted the kids and found out that they didn't know the difference between a barn and a garage. We built a very short float that year. These are the element to consider.

- a. A place close to Brooklyn and the school. Close to the school is very important for underclassmen. Beggars can't be choosy, and very good floats have been built from faraway places, but most floats are not built for travel. If you know you are going to have to travel a long ways, you may want to build your float "extra sturdy." Your driver is going to have to drive very slowly when hauling the float to the parade. (you will make repairs when you get there)
- b. A place that is secluded and back away from the road is preferred. Also, you will want a place that can be locked and secured.
- c. You will want a host who understands exactly what they are getting into.
- d. In a perfect world, your host will give you a small corner of the facility to save materials from one year to the next.
- e. In an even more perfect world, your host is also "your builder"
- f. Regarding location, try for perfection, but take what you get and make it work.

**Get a wagon-** We have traditionally used old hay wagons, they have huge advantages, but are getting harder to find. Big car trailers or really any kind of trailer that is comparably sized to a hay wagon is acceptable. You may have to modify traditional skirting ideas to fit your unique trailer.

- A. Try to get a wagon you can use for four years. Your sides, front, and back are all reusable if you store them correctly. If you keep the same wagon, everything you custom build to fit can be used without modifications. Try to get a wagon that is in good shape. Wagons that are tilted or falling apart pose problems.
- B. You'll want the wagon delivered and picked up in a timely manner.
- C. **You'll need to get someone to the pull the wagon in the parade.** While this is important, there is no hurry to fill this position. Generate a list of people willing to pull the float. The driver should be an adult, not a student. This is typically a position of honor, and you will have many volunteers. I usually wait until Monday or Tuesday to pick the driver, but it can be done earlier. This gives me a chance to see who has been working on the float and deserves the honor of having their dad or mom pull it in the parade. Once I had a driver arrive and was not prepared with the right hitch. Luckily we problem solved it, but there was significant stress. The hookup should have been checked out earlier., probably on Wednesday. I once had a driver arrive later than planned. He had to drive faster than he should have driven and the float suffered damage.
- D. **Get a builder-** For the most part, kids don't know how to build things. Most elements of a "modern Columbia float" involve a substructure made of wood and cardboard. It is important to have someone who understands how to build things with structural integrity (a sturdy wall capable of holding defenders, a whale's tail that moves up and down, a boat deck that holds three crew members and rocks up and down. Put out the word that you need someone who is willing to put in some time, especially on the first weekend. If you can secure a committed builder, you will have one of the key elements to success covered. **Every builder I ever had really loved the experience.** Some of my best builders were also hosts. This meant they were always around, as were their tools. My best builders also had a little "teacher" in them, showing students how to do certain things and allowing the students to build as much as possible themselves. How much parents are involves is always an issue. There are people who think that the kids should do everything themselves. When it's all over they will say, "Our float doesn't look very good, but at least the kids did it all by themselves." In other words, if creating a good product was the goal, they failed. The fact is, if they don't get some help and direction, they are being set up to fail. Obviously, freshmen need the most direction, but as an advisor, you will find that they need less and less direction each year. With every new float they will take on more responsibility and will need less and less direction each year. Your own student builders will emerge, many of whom are "hands on" kids who will flourish in a non-academic setting and will come out of the experience as respected class leaders.
- E. **Get an idea-** Many poor floats are the result of poor ideas. Kids who have never built a float will have wonderfully elaborate ideas that are very difficult, if not impossible to build. Student government normally picks a theme. Sometimes their ideas are not very helpful to the process because their theme idea is not very conducive to building quality floats. Individual classes will

vote on an idea that fits the theme. The trick is to understand that **the popularity of the idea you choose is far less important than what you are actually going to build.** One year the theme was “cartoons.” The junior really liked the cartoon “The Jetsons,” but trying to figure out what to build posed real problem. The Jetsons was set in the future; everything had sleek futuristic lines, not easily duplicated on a float. They tried to build the famous flying car, but it was almost impossible to pull off. Their flying car looked like a soup bowl. **When your class votes, give them more detailed options.** For instance,

Choose among the following options for this year’s float. Theme “cartoon”

- a. Flintstones- build a few “bedrock” style houses with characters in costume. Have a Flintstone car on the front with wheels that turn. Paint the bedrock quarry on the back of the float with a long neck dinosaur coming off the back.
- b. Scooby-doo. Build the “mystery machine” van with all the characters in costume sitting in the van. Create a scary scene around them, dead trees and ghosts etc.
- c. Peter Pan- build a giant pirate ship that comes out the back of the float. We can paint the upper part of the deck on the hayrack on the back so it looks like the boat continues farther back. We can have a swampy setting off the ship’s bow with an alligator or mermaid or any other buildable characters from the movie. We would have recognizable characters in costume on the deck of the boat.
- d. Mickey Mouse- build the famous “Steamboat Willie” boat. Do it all in black and white.

**If you look for ideas on line you might be surprised at how many people have already built the float you are considering.** Search “Steamboat Willie parade float” and pictures come up. You don’t have to reinvent the wheel. Never pick an idea without knowing what things you might be able to build. In general, avoid the following: humans that are supposed to look like humans or animals that are supposed to look like animals. The worst theme ever is “super heroes,” but leaders continue to choose it every 5-10 years. Very few builders are able to build a super hero that is recognizable. For your centerpiece you really want something that is recognizable in an instant. Details and supporting items can be added as time or volunteers allow. Look through the pictures at the end of this section to see what is possible. **You will need a slogan.** Do not get stressed over this. Any slogan that ties your idea to football will work.

Theme	idea	slogan
Restaurants	“Rainforest Café”	“Panther is on the menu”
Breakfast Cereal	“Captain Crunch”	“Crunch the Panthers”
Nursery Rhyme	“Hickory Dickory Dock	“Time is running out on Mason”
Disney Movies	“Pinocchio”	“Blow out Dundee” (whale reference)

**The quality of your float will determine how your float is evaluated. The slogan is a distant secondary concern.** Picking an idea based on a clever slogan does not work unless you have something good to

build. I've begun building floats without any idea what our slogan would be. We just accumulated ideas and voted on it by Tuesday or so. With regards to judges' evaluation, you get a pass/fail grade on slogans. There is no extra credit for being overly clever with slogans.

**Get Materials-** have students try to drop off materials at building site sometime the week before. You need scrap lumber, 2x2's and 2x4's of various lengths (take anything that is offered and create a scrap pile). Scrap plywood and particle board, old cans of spray paint, old gallons of house paint, lots of white napkins, staplers, scissors, staple guns, and glue guns and glue sticks. Someone will generally order bulk tissue paper and charge your class. You will need at least five gallons of wall paper paste. Call around to the big block stores for the best price. The specific materials you need might vary based on your float. For instance, the theme for my last freshman float was "the seven wonders of the Ancient world." As freshmen, we had last choice. "The Hanging Garden's of Babylon" was still available. It was my number one choice because I knew we could build a beautiful garden. Other classes passed on it because they didn't know what it was. We planned to build a large arbor out of 2x4's and then paste tissue to cover all the wood; consequently, we required a lot of sturdy 2x4's to create float. We also needed plastic flower pots, one very large. You might need chicken wire, depending on your plans. Some old school builders expect the float to be built from chicken wire, but most builders today do not use much of it. Making chicken wire floats is time consuming and really unnecessary. Modern floats are very much like scenery sets for a stage production. Paint rollers, brushes, and artists brushes are all needed. Make sure that brushes make it into a water tub so they don't dry out. This is a huge problem, kids just leave brushes sitting out and they become ruined. Use latex pain for easy cleaning.

**Start Building-** Generally you are allowed to start building on the Friday one week before homecoming. Many classes choose to start on Saturday morning. Depending how organized you are, it might be a good idea to have a few people help you get things organized for building on Saturday. Attaching elements securely is very important. With things like vertical pillars we'd attach a plywood square securely to the bottom of the pillar, then screw the plywood into the deck of the wagon. Everything gets hidden when the deck is tufted.

**Someone will need to show you how to make flowers and how to tuft.** Find someone you trust to teach the kids. You can't always trust upperclassmen. I've seen them mislead freshmen with overly complicated methods of flower making.

People will arrive and you'll need to have a plan to put them to work. People who come should expect to work. Make clear rules. **"If you are here to goof around, you should leave."**

1. Cover the deck of the wagon with cardboard using a staple gun. Use your scrap cardboard, save your big pieces for other projects. Just piece it together like puzzle until the deck is covered.
2. Get your builders building your primary structure. Make sure you have a plan for getting it attached to the deck of the wagon. The tufting of the deck will hide everything you've done to secure various items.
3. Make flowers- this can require almost unlimited number of students. Though much of the float is covered in tissue because of its ease of application, parts that are covered in flowers, like the

skirts, can be used for all four years. Making flowers is a time consuming project. Find someone who knows how and have them teach your kids.

4. Get people making letters- normally (though not always) the skirt of your float will display your slogan. Have students measure for size of letters to fit and begin to cut them out
5. Assign small projects as needed. Try to work from the middle out. If your skirt is done early kids will flatten it out by leaning up against it. Finished skirts can be laid under the wagon and be safe from harm until ready to be attached..
6. Tufting the deck is one of the last things you do. It goes remarkably fast and once it is done only the people painting the deck will get on the float (unless it is absolutely necessary). I most often painted a football field. By laying down 2x4's to make the lines and then spraying the area in the middle green, we had a sharp contrast between the white lines and the green grass of a football field. The 2x4's actually smash the tissue down a little, making that portion of the float look like real chalk lines. Once the deck is done- try to stay off of it.
7. If your float has a moving part, avoid the temptation of demonstrating it too much. You want it to be working when the judges come by.

Talk with kids about ideas that they have to add to the float. One year we did an aquarium from "Finding Nemo." As luck would have it, our art teacher had just taught the students how to make giant paper fish. I had an old chest in the basement. We wrapped it in plastic wrap (Saran wrap) and then tufted it. It looked like we built a perfect treasure chest for our aquarium. When we were done, we just tore the tufting and plastic wrap off and the old chest was none the worse for wear. Our giant "Nemo" was built much the same way. Someone had a very large stuffed Nemo toy. We wrapped it in plastic wrap and then "smooth tufted" it (a lot like paper-mache) People marveled at our ability to make such an exact copy of what Nemo was supposed to look like. We toyed with the idea of having seagulls from the movie (you know, the one that say, "Mine! Mine! Mine!") Well, this idea was going nowhere, which was OK because we had plenty of things on our float already. One day, walking out of his house, one of my builders saw a small pile of kids' plastic bowling pins. It hit him that the seagulls from the movie were shaped very much like bowling pins. We simply added wings, beaks, and a very tight tufting. We suddenly had 10 of the iconic seagulls that could be grouped around the float wherever we wanted.

If there is a suggested change in plans, or something isn't working out like it was supposed to, call together everyone who is working at that moment and take a vote. The kids love democracy and this will prevent squabbling.

Luan is a wood product that is sold like plywood in 4x8 sheets. It is relatively inexpensive when compared to other lumber prices. Cutting two sheets in half to make 2x8 will give enough surface to skirt the float on both sides. When flowers are hot glued to the luan, you have a skirt that can be used for all four years. The flowers will come out of storage flattened out, but a small group of students can re-fluff them to life quite quickly. Once that is done, lay them out under the wagon where they will be safe until it is time to attach them. The thin wood on the side is not only durable, it allows for a surface strong enough to hold drywall screws attaching

the letters of your slogan. This allows you to take letter off and change the slogan every year without damaging the side. **Be careful driving drywall screws into a tufted surface, the screw can catch on the tufting and rip it off the luan.** It takes touch and practice. Poke the screw through the cardboard letter and make room for the screw by creating a small open spot between the tufting. Turn the screw only enough to hold the letter, don't draw the screw tight. For the front skirt, we normally take a piece of tarp that has a slit in the middle to allow the tongue of the wagon move back and forth. Hot glue flowers to the tarp and this can generally be used for all four years.

Most hay wagons have brackets on the back for a vertical "hay rack." In the first few years we attached luan to the hay rack that came with the wagon. By attaching the luan to the front and back of the rack, you create two more surfaces for your creativity. We detached the luan during tear down and used it for the same purpose in subsequent years. We finally got smart and built our own rack that would fit into the brackets. This allowed us to lift the entire rack off and store it for next year, ready to go. (It took 8-10 people to get off the trailer) We simply repainted it the next year. This became a project area that could be worked on with the rack leaned against a wall away from the other work going on with the wagon.

**Get to the parade site as early as possible-** Travel as slowly as possible to minimize damage. **Bring a repair kit** with you with everything you might need to make any repairs necessary.

**Put on a show-** Encourage all of your class to march in the parade. Your class will put a lot of time and effort into this project. Encourage costumes that go along with your theme. **Go Slow- Be the Show!** The float should be moving at a crawl, it's ok to even come to a halt, so people on the parade route get a good look at your prize creation.

**Take it apart-** This is a much easier process than you might think. Ten people can break down the whole float in a few hours. Save and store whatever you can. I think we used the same goalpost four years in a row. Old letters or anything else that could be stuffed into a plastic bag should be saved. All the staples will need to be pulled with pliers.

**Tips for harmonious building-** There are good jobs and bad jobs. No one likes making flowers, it gets very boring. Everyone wants to spray paint- that is fun. Some kids are very aggressive about only wanting to do what's fun. As advisor, you have to make sure that fun jobs are spread evenly. When we were building the Great Wall of China, everyone would make flowers, and when we had a significant pile, everyone would "assault the wall" and attach the flowers with wall paper paste. This seemed fair to all.

**Wall paper paste-** 5 gallons should be enough, if you run out, powdered mixes can be bought locally pretty cheaply. It is easy to waste the paste. This paste is designed to keep wall paper on walls for decades. You're trying to stick tissue on cardboard for a couple weeks. You

really don't need much paste. A thin application put on with a brush will suffice. Don't try to cover too big of an area at one time, it will dry on you.

**Spray paint-** Don't over paint. A light dusting of yellow is as effective as a dark application and much cheaper too. If anyone has access to a spray machine that would use standard gallon paint, you could save a small fortune. Spray paint is expensive. It also smells bad and gives kids headaches, It is good to do it outdoors or inside late at night after you've sent most kids home. . The Pinocchio float was made of flowers that had been scraped off old floats over the years. They were a mass of various colors, but the whale was going to be black. A painter friend came in and used his sprayer to cover the Whale in black paint. It took him 20 minutes and used just a gallon of very cheap black latex paint. I cannot even imagine how expensive it would have been to try to make the whale black using just cans of spray paint.

Here is the Judge's evaluation sheet and rules for float competition.

## **FLOAT JUDGING**

Restrictions:

1. Floats must be built on hay wagons
2. Must have a safe traveling width and height
3. \$400.00 limit on spending (paint, flowers, etc.)
4. Float construction may begin the last Friday before homecoming.

Grade:

5. Must have an adult present at all working times
6. May not work later than 10:00 p.m. weeknights and 11:00 p.m. on weekends

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Floats due at Monroe Street by 4:15 p.m. on day of homecoming.
8. Members of a class shall not go to or invade another classes site. Penalty can include disqualification from entire homecoming.

### **Judges Criteria**

**Please rate each category from 1 – 10. 1 being the lowest, and 10 the highest.**

Followed Rules and Restrictions (I will fill out).....

\_\_\_\_10\_\_\_\_



Visual Appeal.....

\_\_\_\_\_

Creativity .....

\_\_\_\_\_

(moving parts, costumes, cleverness)

Theme.....

\_\_\_\_\_

(degree to which theme is followed and tied to the homecoming football game;  
degree to which float promotes positive football spirit)

Construction Difficulty.....

\_\_\_\_\_

(apparent time and effort needed to complete float)

Construction Materials.....

\_\_\_\_\_

(paper flowers are most desirable. Some paper mache may be appropriate.  
Cardboard or other building materials would receive low marks. Excessive  
donations of materials, money or the using of pre-built parts may lower score.)

Class of ..... **20**\_\_\_\_\_

Total Score..... \_\_\_\_\_

. We no longer require a literal hay wagon. Good wagons are getting hard to find and classes  
have learned to use other things like car transporters.

**Here follows pictures of various floats that I've built over the years along with  
an explanation of how we accomplished various feats. Just looking through the  
pictures and seeing what can be done or how things can be done should be very  
helpful.**



This is the back of the “Rainforest café” float. We simply printed out a menu on a transparency sheet and used an overhead projector to project the image onto the luan board which had been painted white. We just traced the images and painted. This allowed a lot of people to work on the project. One did not really have to have any art skills to work on the back menu. This also allows for a lot of creativity with regards to menu items. On this float, we had everyone who worked on it sign their name on the back and bottom of the float. We bordered the luan with tufting. This rack was removable (very heavy) but was ready to go and be reused next year after painting. Because the luan was designed to hang low in the back, this float needed no skirting on the back.



Here is a view of the same float from the side. Notice the large insects placed at various places around the float. As luck would have it, our art teacher had just taught his students how to make these. Most of these insects were actually “art projects” that we just put around the float.



Here you can see the letters of the slogan attached to luan siding. The definition of the letters is very good. This is accomplished by tufting the cardboard letters, tucking some of the tissue over the edges, (this hides the corrugation in the cardboard) and trimming with scissors anything that takes away from the clarity of the shape. The idea here was to have a football field in a jungle. You can see the yard markers and the goal line. The distinctive "g" on the goal line marker was made by using gold painted tissue that is packed in an otherwise blue background. We used rope lengths to make vines and attached thousands of handmade leaves.



With this float, we dressed our JV football and soccer players as opposing team members (western Panthers). They pulled the float through the parade route under the direction of a single task master who wore a Columbia Jersey. This was the tallest float I ever helped build. We actually had trouble getting it under all the trees on the way to town.





Here you see some of our vines and insects that were actually “art projects” for art class. You might also notice the difference between flowers and tufted tissue. This is a tufted float. Tufting is 20 times quicker than making flowers from napkins.



This was “The Great Wall of China” class of 2003. We had opposing football players on the deck trying to knock down the wall AKA “Columbia Defense” Of course they failed miserably. Lots of students were walking in costume beside the float. This was literally a well built wall, strong enough to have people stand on. This class never learned the art of tufting, everything here was made of flowers.



Here is a side view of "The Great Wall" during the parade.



You can see that the Great Wall actually hangs off the back of the hay wagon. That is where we climbed in and up onto the wall.



Here is one of my early freshman floats. "Hickory Dickory Dock" You can see painted cardboard here, something I learned to abhor, but it was the best we could do in the time we had. This class never learned the art of tufting so everything was made of flowers. The clock had a person in it spinning it around to show all four sides of the clock.





Here is another side to the clock. Flowers were painted before being placed on the float.



This is probably the best float I have ever seen. Captain Crunch's boat is coming out of a cereal box. We used a transparency and overhead projector to duplicate the front of the cereal box exactly. Two strong boys are inside the cereal box, the boat was built on a sturdy 4x8 beam, and a fulcrum was placed under that beam. The boys in the cereal box were able to make the boat rock up and down. This created the problem of how to connect the boat to the "water". Because they would be flexible, we used tarps with flowers attached to connect the boat to the deck of the wagon. The milk box coming off the side was an afterthought. We did some clever things with the information on the side panels of the cereal box. This was our first float after 9/11, so they wanted to put an American Flag on the back.



Here is the boat in the rocked up position. Generally, people on the float are people who were there building every day. The front skirt is made of flowers hot glued on a tarp.



The cannon coming from out the side had a fire extinguisher periodically fired by someone under the deck. The stereo from the back of the truck belted out "Rock the boat, don't rock the boat baby." This boat had a wooden skeleton, cardboard frame, and flowers everywhere.



Here's the float's entourage Go Slow! Be the show!



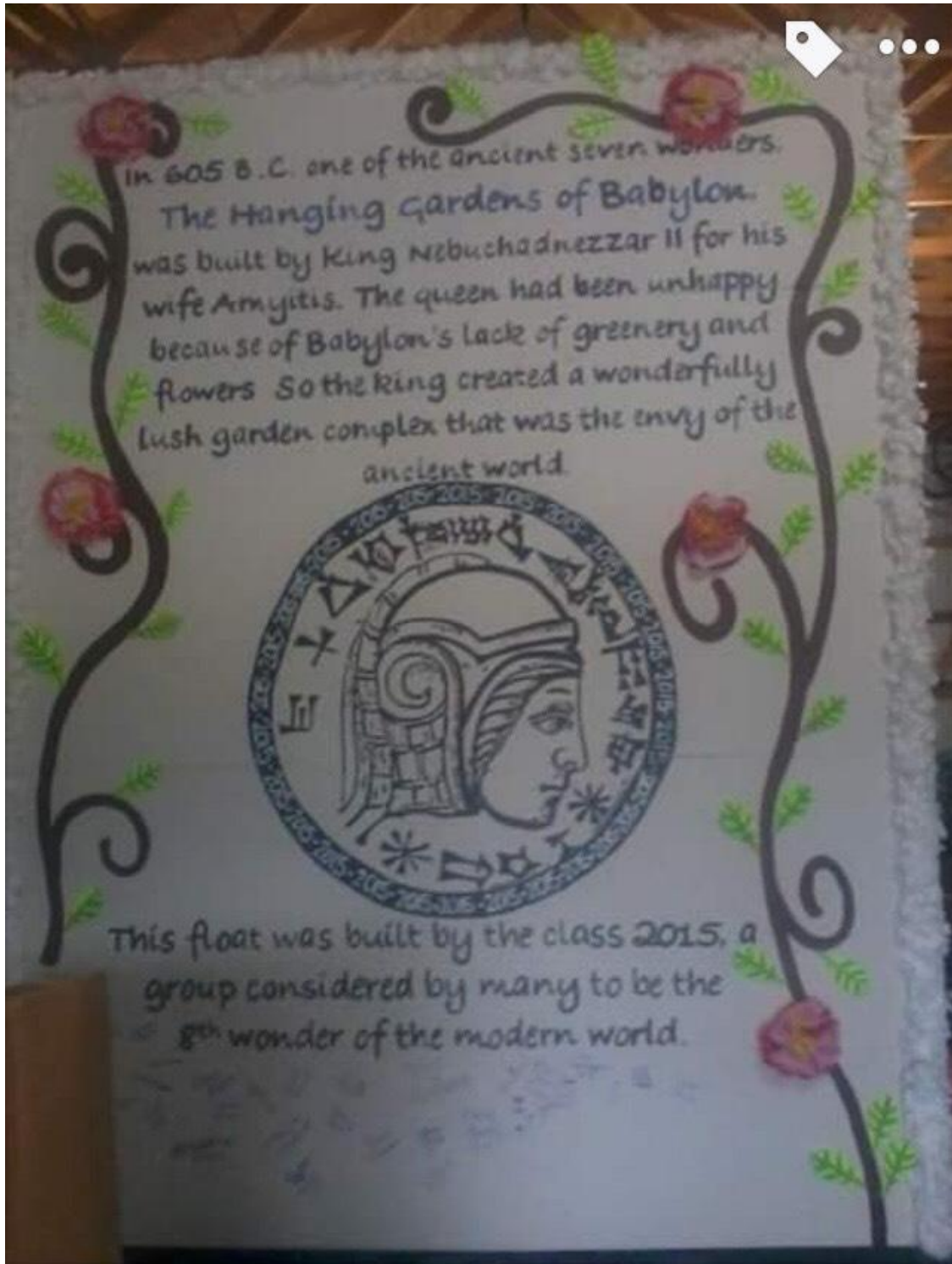
Flowers were spray painted red and blue separately, and then attached to the luan with wall paper paste.



Pinocchio is riding on top of a whale. The rib cage door opens and closes exposing Dundee football fans trapped inside the whale, the tail goes up and down



This is a good freshmen float. A simple structure, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world- "Hanging Gardens of Babylon" We had a swing for the princess and we had a king. The entire back is designed to take off for repainting for next year. The skirt will be used for four years. The flower pots were yard markers on our football field.



The back of the "Gardens" float explained what it was and was signed by its builders.



The "Nemo Aquarium" It had a bubble machine with all the iconic fish from the movie's aquarium scene. The sea chest was from my basement- we simply covered it with saran wrap and tufted it. Nemo was a giant stuffed toy that we wrapped in plastic wrap and then "smooth" tufted and painted. We painted the dentist office as seen from the aquarium on the back of the front side. The back side had a fishing boat sticking out with a net full of Ida football players hanging off a fishing boom. Elements were hung with fishing line, like an aquarium, it was well lit. We used a lot of the same vines from our first year's "Garden" float.



Junior float- theme Movies- "Wizard of Oz" Parade characters pose in front of float





The witches feet under the house moved up and down like she was giving her final kicks. There was a lot of detail and color on this float. Anything colorful that the kids would make, if it looked good, it went on the float. As Juniors, the kids had less time to devote to building. This is when it is extremely helpful to have saved as much as possible from earlier floats. Notice the clear definition of the letters in slogan.



This is the back of the “Wizard” float as it is pulled around the track at half time. This is a tradition that comes and goes depending on the condition of the track. The crowd enjoys the float and the kids get to show off a little. The letters on the back “Columbia Eagles” were actually off an earlier float.” This is the Star Theater with its premiere showing of Wizard of Oz. The billing has some cleverness tying the movie into homecoming and football.



Theme- Board Games- idea "Candy Land" Someone brought the board game in and we looked it over to see what things we thought we could build. This is the class that first used tufting as Freshman and this was their senior float. The plum tree was chicken wire with flowers tied on. I wanted them to have a taste of old school float building. This float has its slogan on the side of the back piece.

# CANDY LAND

**Object**  
Destroy Your Opponent



**Contents**  
1 Football Stadium  
11 Hungry Football Players  
Thousands Of Screaming Fans

## How To Set Up The Game

1. 7<sup>th</sup> Hour Pep Rally
2. Homecoming Parade
3. Turn On The Lights, And Pack The Stands

## Penalties

1. Holding- Wildcats Hold A Superior Eagle Defender, Move Ball Back 10 Yards.
2. Facemasking- Wildcats Cheat And Grab A Flying Eagle's Facemask, Move Ball Back 15 Yards.
3. Offsides- Wildcat Defenders Get Scared And Jump Offsides, Move Ball Up 5 Yards.

## Penalty Spaces

Goopy Gumdrops A.K.A Eagle Defensive Backs Intercept A Wildcat Pass With Their Sticky Coverage.

Lost In The Lollipop Woods A.K.A. Eagle Defensive Lineman Give No Ground And Force Wildcats To Punt.

Stuck In Molasses Swamp A.K.A. Superior Eagle Defenders Swarm The Ball And Leave The Wildcats Stuck For The Rest Of The Half.

## How To Win The Game

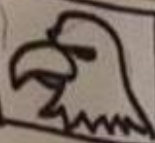
Destroy Your Opponents Team, And Walk Off The Field With A Homecoming Victory.



Here is the back of the "Candy land Float" It is the instructions for playing the game. This was a senior float and was impressive with its color and detail. Notice that this section is not attached to the float at the time of picture taking. This allows students to work on it in a separate area, maximizing work space and allowing people to get more done. This class liked to take pictures of the float building process and paste them to the back of the float.



This is another senior float. Theme "Super heroes" The Incredible Hulk. In this float Hulk is rising up out of a football field with a Dundee football player in his right fist and a football in his left. Unfortunately this picture does not show his face. This float broke one of my cardinal rules which is to never try to build "humanoid" figures. They "almost" never work out. Hulks head is squarish so it was easier to make than a normal head. I did "google" "Hulk parade float" and a design quite like this one came up. They tufted their hulk or flowered him in some way which I thought destroyed his definition. So we chose to smooth tuft over chicken wire and it really turned out pretty amazing. Our slogan was quite simple "Columbia Smash" The "dummy" was made from wide transparency tape. A student's body is taped head to toe with the sticky side out. The tape is cut off the body with scissors, filled with wadded up paper, and taped back together. This was a trick they learned in art class. It took a lot of tape and ended up being more expensive than expected, but it was light weight and it looked good. We added it as an afterthought and didn't really engineer Hulk's right arm to hold any extra weight so it had to be light. The kid's convinced me that they could build it, and they did.



COLUMBIA CENTRAL SENIORS

# HULK

HULK  
SMASH  
VIKINGS!





A dad who was a comic book fanatic made this picture for us. We transferred it to a transparency and used an overhead projector to shine the image onto the front side of our float's back. We traced it, painted it and added comic book details.