

TIPS for New Advisors

T Take Time to Train

I Initiate contact with school staff to keep them Informed

P Plan your Calendar

S Structures and Sanity: Stay Organized

“Greatness is not in where we stand, but in what direction we are moving. We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it - but sail we must, and not drift, nor lie at anchor.”

Take Time to Train! Train your elected/appointed officers, staff, and representatives. (Look to your regional or state organizations, along with NASC’s LEAD conferences and the NASC national conference in June.

Training Areas:

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| 1. Expectations | 3. Follow-up | 5. Model |
| 2. Responsibilities | 4. Communications | |

1. Expectations: includes qualifications of officers/staff; mission of the student government or school; monitoring behavior, etc. Give a folder (better yet, binder) to officers, staff, and representatives - include the constitution and the calendar, list expected responsibilities, previous project planning guides, rosters with emails and cell numbers, etc. Officers, staff and representatives should bring their binder to every meeting – really helpful as all information is in one location! (Get it on the web if possible.) It’s easier for representatives to report to their classes and allows easier follow-up.

2. Responsibilities - specifically for each position (constitution or bylaws) and additional administrative behavioral expectations. Be sure to include representatives (possibly attend all meeting, reporting to peers within one week, and actively participate in the planning and facilitation of one student government project/program, etc.)

3. Follow-up – student leaders need to let others know about their progress, be aware of check-in progress report dates, don’t wait until the last minute (“Failure to plan on your part does not constitute an emergency on my part.”)

4. Communications - a central bulletin board for officers and staff; a school bulletin board (or TV scrolling announcements) to post stuff for representatives and general school news (including regional, state new, and national news); mailboxes for the officers and staff (can be file folders, coffee cans, etc. – not always electronic!); students fill in schedule cards (google forms); discuss email routines and expectations (consider generic SGA gmails and use of the google drives where officers/staff can access documents!)

5. Model - give sample agendas; if needed, run a meeting to demonstrate; model a presentation to the leadership team (have students role play to practice) – advisors also need to model organization, good communication skills, positive attitudes, etc.

Initiate Contact with School Staff to keep them Informed! Because students are sometimes missing classes, taking class time for reports or special activities, or asking for staff help (secretaries, building services, etc.), be PROACTIVE to head off problems before they arise. Touch base with secretaries, building services, general staff. Email updates, personal one-on-one conversations, student government report at faculty meetings, regular meetings with administrative staff, etc.

Initiate contact with school staff to keep them Informed!

- Presentation to principal/leadership team of activities and programs: Always keep the administration up-to-date (“heads up” on possible issues, etc.) Presentations allow staff to give input and help before the activity - give plenty of time between the presentation and activity to take care of possible problems or extended ideas.
- Email or flyers to all staff: Send informative emails to staff (another advance notice) or special memos (tea bag, penny for your thoughts, etc.) - no surprises - and it gives the staff enough time to be involved.

- Appreciation for help and support: Recognition of the staff lets them know that you value their support, involvement, and opinions.

Plan your Calendar! Juggling responsibilities between family, teaching, and student government...time management is a must!!!

- distribute a calendar: include important school, regional, state, and national dates
 - be sure to include holidays and professional days
 - include required school events (*testing, assemblies, traditions or events already calendared for you*)
 - personal or family events (block out days around busy family times especially at the holidays!)
- go over meeting and general assembly procedures (attendance requirements, forms, reporting, makeup work, etc.)
- review major student government events (*dances, elections, service drives, etc.*) - allow at least 6-8 weeks between major events! Don't forget state and national conferences!!!
- review minor events (*spirit days, appreciation days, etc.*)

Be sure to put ALL events on the master school calendar to avoid conflicts with other school activities. It is best to get events on the school calendar in the spring for the following year – the calendar fills quickly in many schools.

(Caution - dances - in the cafeteria - but block out the gym...don't want outside groups coming to use the building when you have students at a dance)

REMEMBER - the goal is to have the students prepare, implement, and evaluate/reflect on all projects

Structures:

- SGA models (elected, appointed, etc.) Recommend at least a minimal amount of elected positions – it is a student organization! Remember, appointed positions often bring in a lot more interested and energetic students. Consider the titles of positions, spirit director/deputy versus spirit chairman/chairperson – in middle school be creative – facilities director could be a sixth grader that checks the meeting room for recycling, papers left behind, etc.
- Elections in the spring allow for shadowing and “role alike” opportunities for training (peer training is the best). There may be some positions that need to wait until September (especially in middle schools).
- Election tips (a whole other handout) – but several important items: 1) get the administrator's signature on your election packet (that includes qualifications, requirements, pledge); 2) never count ballots by yourself; 3) do not announce the vote totals – winning or losing by a small or large margin doesn't change the results, it only hurts feelings (if using paper ballots, an administrator should sign the ballot results and watch as the ballot results/ballots are sealed; for electronic ballots, the results should still be verified by the principal, then the actual results sealed – it would then be the responsibility of the administration if they unseal the results for a pushy parent! Shred after a year.)

Sanity: Stay Organized – at the beginning of each month:

- expect a reconciliation report from the financial secretary – other required forms (have the financial secretary give a presentation to the treasurer, financial director, financial committee about required forms, etc.) – many school systems have an “Independent Activity Fund Manual” or other type of guidelines dealing with co-curricular activities.
- record your stipend hours (following whatever guidelines your school system has for payment sponsoring an activity)
- be sure to change bulletin boards monthly. Posters should be moved every three days and NEVER left up after an event.
- keep project planning forms in a file cabinet or notebooks (*attendance & rosters, advocacy, elections, executive board, finances, general assemblies, leadership/citizenship, region activities, public relations, publicity, service, spirit, social, national events, and advisor stuff*)
 - spreadsheet/database with student schedules and contact information (email distribution list)
 - legislation and project planning forms
 - agendas and minutes
 - spreadsheet – have accurate attendance for student service learning (SSL) hours (if applicable)

Reach Out to Veteran Advisors!!!

Other resources: National Student Council (NSC) web site: <https://natstuco.org/adviser-resource-center>

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