

SDSCA Newsletter from the hills
Gary Linn SDSCA Executive Director



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from your SDSCA board!

I hope each and everyone of you have a wonderful Holiday time to enjoy family and friends! Please travel safely if you are flying or driving!! Just make sure you take the time for yourself to REST, RELAX and REPEAT!!! Hug your family and friends and tell them how much you care about them!!



Join the Conversation: The ABCs of Advising



Advising takes creativity, patience, and heart—discover the A-Z of inspiration to help you and your student leaders grow, shine, and lead!

Appreciation—nothing motivates people more than appreciation. When given the opportunity, say, “thank you.” Sometimes a special thank you note is in order, but you can also say thank you with gifts, dinners, certificates, plaques, etc. People who are appreciated tend to be more supportive!

Balance—stay balanced and build engagement! It is so easy to allow students who are mature and experienced handle the blood drive, canned food drive, or adapt-a-highway project.

When they leave, however, you are busy training someone else to do the job. Keep your student activities program young by providing opportunities for students in all grades to share with the veteran members. Take a back seat and let students train students.

Constitution – a good constitution or vision/mission statement contains basic information that defines what you do and why you do it. It outlines purpose, structure, election/appointment procedures, and other vital areas of your organization. Your constitution or vision/mission statement should be reviewed at least every two years. You may wish to have bylaws that include election/appointment procedures and other items that may change from year to year. Your student executive board should approve bylaws annually.

Democratic process – a student activities program is a great way to teach the democratic process. Remember, educators are helping to shape students into responsible citizens of the future. That process starts now.

Evaluation – never be afraid to hear what others think about what you are doing and how you are doing it. You should evaluate officers, advisors, events, and the student activities program as a whole. Evaluations should be anonymous and should be administered in a way that encourages comments as well as a rating. Treat evaluations as an opportunity to provide constructive criticism to improve activities, as well as improve actions.

Failure & Feedback – be willing to allow your students to fail. Sometimes, no matter how much you stress a deadline, the students just don’t make it. Failure can be frustrating. Your number one concern is to not take it personally. Your number two concern should be to turn it into a lesson. Every failure is a teachable moment. Get feedback on why something didn’t work well. Did you have enough publicity? Were committee members communicating? Where did the breakdown occur? Sometimes you can learn more from the failures and feedback than you can from the successes.

Goals – set goals with your students—both position and organizational goals. Consider how your goals will impact the school community. Include environmental, spirit, leadership, advocacy, and other areas to have a well-rounded program. High school folks...remember that there is life after Homecoming!

Human – kids want to know that you are human...what you like to eat, that you get frustrated too, that you have a family and other after school responsibilities. Kids want to feel like part of your family. As part of your family, they should be able to see you at your best and worst and still care about you! The easiest way to develop this “relationship” is to model it for them. Be involved in their lives, if you can, without compromising your own. Go to soccer games, choral concerts, dance recitals, science fair, and other activities. They need all of the support that you can give and that shows them that you care about the whole student.

Ideas – be open to all ideas and think outside the box! A jello wrestling fundraiser may not be your idea of fun, but it may be theirs, and it may be very successful. Some ideas are better than others, but remember, this is a learning experience for students.

Judgment – use sound judgment. Move slowly until you consider the direction in which you are heading. Read the signs,

Knowledge – knowledge is golden so keep records of past events so students can review them. Why re-invent the wheel when it was already invented? Be sure that students have researched background information before they proceed with a controversial event or activity.

Leadership - is an action, not a position!! This is a lesson that you need to teach all of your student activity members. The class representative is as important as the president when he/she fulfills his/her responsibilities.

Meaningful Positions – have meaningful roles and positions, both elected and appointed. Each position should have a set number of duties and responsibilities that require commitment. These duties should be reasonable and meaningful. They should also have some leeway to do other things within your program that will provide a more cohesive group of students.

Negotiate – understand that acceptance based on agreement lights the way. Never give up. Negotiate, compromise, or reach a consensus.

Open Minds and Original Thoughts – keep an open mind. Just because your school has always had a coat drive doesn't mean that you have to. Change ideas and expand ideas.

Participation – involve the uninvolved and invisible student. Be sure that your student activities program looks at the needs of the total school community.

Questions – continue to question your students—it makes them think!

Rest – advisors tend to burn out and drop out. They often don't get the support from the administration, parents, or the student population. They lose sight of the big picture and in the process, burn out. Say "no" when you need to preserve sanity and rest. Consider a co-advisor to share some of the responsibilities. Allow a parent to help and if there aren't any volunteers, ask. This is a tough job that requires a lot of time and work. You don't have to do it alone!

Success – everyone likes to know when they are doing a good job so make it a part of your job to let others know that they are doing a good job. Be creative. Recognize good actions at meetings, make public address announcements, etc. Be specific when you share the accolades. Don't just say, "Good Job," say, "It was really great the way you got everyone working together and the way you stayed under budget!"

Think – make the students think! Some of the most important time with students is when you are simply thinking and talking. Whether you are talking about decisions, actions, thoughts, ideas, plans, etc., make your students think. Play the devil's advocate. Question their choices and decisions. Make them accountable for their actions. They will become better thinkers if they are forced to justify why they do what they do!

Understanding – try to be understanding of the busy life that our students have. Many of the student leaders are also involved in many other activities. Help them to set priorities, know their limits, and manage their time.

Veterans – your past student leaders are your veterans! Develop some method of keeping in touch with these alumni. Have your historians keep an alumni registry. Enjoy and share in their successes. Have them come back and talk to your students about how being involved helped in high school, in college, in their jobs, and in their life!

Why & Wonderful – your experience as a student activities advisor will be wonderful. It gets easier and easier each year you do it. Seek support, a mentor, or a confidant with whom you can vent or brag. Although there is a lot of work, remember the rewards are plentiful!

X-tra Special – the student activities advisor is an x-tra-ordinary person. You are x-tremely valuable and offer lifetime x-periences for your students.

Your Way? – recognize that you are an advisor and that this is the STUDENT activities program. Put the responsibility on the students to get the job done, even if it isn't the way that you would do it. You can share your own suggestions, but allow the students to use their own. Step in when you need to (i.e. in situations that call for adult intervention). They need you for support, but this is their student activity program, and ultimately, their legacy.

Zip and Zeal – these are energy words. Yes, it takes a lot of energy to be a student activities advisor. You will find, however, that when you put energy into your job, your students will follow suit. Remember, energy doesn't mean that you have to spend all of your time just working in student activities. Well-placed energy in the summer often means smooth sailing in the fall.

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Here's another Short ABC list. Consider doing this as an exercise with your student leaders. Create an alphabet at the beginning and end of the year – you might even have creative students who will illustrate the alphabet and post it in the leadership room for inspiration!

- A – Appreciation** – Recognize effort, celebrate success, and value every contribution.
- B – Building Engagement** – Create opportunities that connect and motivate students.
- C – Communication** – Keep information clear, consistent, and inclusive.
- D – Dedication** – Be the steady, reliable guide your students can count on.
- E – Empathy** – Listen, understand, and support the individual behind the student leader.
- F – Flexibility** – Adapt when things don't go as planned (and they won't!).
- G – Growth** – Encourage learning through both successes and challenges.
- H – Humor** – Keep perspective and bring joy to the journey.
- I – Inclusion** – Make sure every student feels welcome, valued, and heard.
- J – Joy** – Celebrate the fun and fulfillment that come from student leadership.
- K – Kindness** – Lead with compassion in all interactions.
- L – Listening** – Give students your full attention and validate their ideas.
- M – Mentorship** – Guide, challenge, and empower without taking over.
- N – Networking** – Build connections that expand student opportunities.
- O – Organization** – Plan ahead so creativity has room to flourish.
- P – Patience** – Growth takes time—especially with teenagers!
- Q – Quality Time** – Be present; meaningful moments matter more than minutes.
- R – Reflection** – Help students learn from every experience.
- S – Support** – Be their cheerleader and steady hand behind the scenes.
- T – Trust** – Empower students to lead by showing you believe in them.
- U – Understanding** – Recognize what motivates each student individually.
- V – Vision** – Help students see beyond the moment to the impact they can make.
- W – Wisdom** – Share experience thoughtfully to guide decision-making.
- X – X-Factor** – Bring that special spark that inspires students to shine.
- Y – Youth Empowerment** – Center student voice and choice in every decision.
- Z – Zeal** – Approach advising with energy, passion, and purpose!

