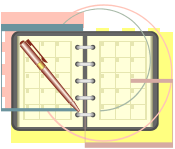


# **THE ROLES OF THE** **STUDENT COUNCIL ADVISOR:**

Successful organizations are made possible by willing, patient, and creative advisors/teachers. A progressive and innovative activity or group does not just happen, but is determined by the personal qualities of that Advisor. Unit of the group and the purpose and goals of the group are all vital to an effective organization, yet the very “key” to that group’s success is the adult serving in the Advisor’s capacity. The way that the Advisor plays his or her role can be most significant to an organization and to the school/community that organization serves. How is the role of the Student Council Advisor unique? While there may be a difference on specific duties in a given school, there is a general agreement on the Student Council Advisor’s role as Planner, Consultant, Counselor, Evaluator, Teacher, Agent, Fundraiser, and Salesperson.



## Student Council Advisor as the **PLANNER**

As a planner, the Advisor helps the Student Council set its goals without waiting for excessive time in discussion. The Advisor should try to get the Student Council off to a good start each school year and does not allow the Members too much freedom in the beginning. At first, there is danger that the Advisor may appear to dominate the Student Council; however the Advisor should give direction to the Student Council based on their judgment of the new working group, the previous experiences of its members, the maturity of the members, school policies, school traditions, community influences, etc

The Student Council Advisor helps the Members of the Student Council get acquainted with each other as individuals in order to encourage overall participation, a sense of belonging, and an environment of trust and respect. In regards to the smaller groups within the Student Council, such as Executive Board, Class Officers, or perhaps Key Committee Members, the Student Council Advisor must stay apprised of their work and follow-up frequently to ensure progress. In general, the Student Council Advisor will need to ensure that the Student Council plans adequately and effectively from inception of an idea or project all the way through its completion and evaluation. This indeed requires that the Student Council Advisor be organized themselves!



## The Student Council Advisor as the **CONSULTANT**

As a consultant, the Student Council Consultant helps Student Leaders to find answers, though the Advisor need not answer each question directly; the Advisor should suggest or aid the Student Council Members with ideas but does not do the job for them. The Advisor should help Members by suggesting new projects or recurring project for deliberation, discussion, and implementation. The Advisor needs to be aware of policies, restrictions, and maybe even laws that may impact the activity or event being suggested or considered and should educate the members of such. In short – as a Consultant the Student Council Advisor is one of providing information about possibilities and alternatives without making Member decisions for them or even threatening to veto them. The Student Council Advisor’s concern should be that the Members follow good, sound, practical, Democratic and positive decision making practices and procedures.

During meetings is it best for the Advisor listen more than to speak. If the Advisor has a point to make, perhaps waiting briefly to see if one of the Members doesn’t come up with the same point. In any case, if the Advisor interrupts the presiding officer, some resentment may be created, it is far better to offer guidance prior to the meeting so that the Advisor and the Presiding Officer are in agreement about matters being deliberated and discussed. Inevitably each group will be different, and each will need to be advised in a different manner.



## The Student Council Advisor as the **COUNSELOR**

The Student Council Advisor as the Counselor often helps to mold the attitudes and character of Student Leaders. The informality of many events and activities makes it possible for the Student and the Teacher to become well acquainted on a personal basis. Thus the Student Council Advisor is afforded an opportunity to build confidence and trust with the Student Leaders they work with. As long as the Student Council Advisor adheres to strict policies of honesty, fairness, and sincerity and respects the privileged information in their possession, the Advisor may become an advocate and friend to many Student Leaders and person on whom they can rely. That said, it should be noted that this will vary from Advisor to Advisor, but it should never be forgotten that as the Advisor you are held to a much higher standard of ethics and have much more responsibility placed upon you than your other peers on the Staff. Never forget, that you are the Teacher and the Student Council are the Students and even if it is friendly relationship a line must be drawn and never crossed between being an Educator and being a friend.



## The Student Council Advisor as the **EVALUATOR**

As an Evaluator, the Student Council Advisor is concerned with the “process” as well as the “product” of the Student Council. The Advisor is often in a better position than the students to determine how well the group is getting along and how well they are working together. The Advisor should concern themselves with the techniques used by members or officers while the students or administration are often concerned more with the results, thus the difference between “process” and “product”. The Advisor should observe discussions of committee sessions to ensure that the rights of each individual are being properly respected and should help to bring out the shy or quiet students and help them to become more active in the process. The Advisor should try to prevent the selfish members from disrupting the work of the group and try to direct the aggressive individual toward constructive action. The Advisor should utilize any special talents of the Student Council Members on particular projects or events. The Advisor as well as the Student Council should draw new students as well as those from the less-favored ranks into group affairs.



## The Student Council Advisor as the **TEACHER**

As the teacher, the Student Council Advisor should be concerned with the many aspects of Leadership Training and work to further build and develop Student Council Members Leadership skills in areas such as communication, goal setting, team building, time management, group dynamics, diversity, problem solving, and project planning. The Student Council Advisor should also work with students who will preside at meetings, record minutes, keep financial records, give presentations, and lead other students or activities. If the Student Council Advisor is not well versed on teaching these concepts, it is then incumbent upon the Advisor to seek advice or training which often can come from membership in State and National Student Council Organizations which can be a tremendous resource. The encouragement and the practice of a democratic format using parliamentary procedure and effectively communicating desired outcomes and ensuring that Students are on task are also important to the Advisor in the role of the Teacher.



## The Student Council Advisor as the **AGENT**

The Student Council Advisor is in a large sense an “agent” for the school administration. As such, the Advisor needs to know the attitudes of the school administrators, the school and school district codes, guidelines, and policies. This information must be conveyed to the Student Council and understood by the members. At the same time, the Student Council Advisor needs to make sure the school administration is provided with information on the ideas, activities, and events of the Council. Too often problems are created that could have been avoided because the school administration is called on only to approve or reject Student Council ideas, activities, or events. It should be the Advisor’s policy to encourage the involvement of the administration in the planning of Student Council activities and events in order to avoid miscommunications and problems from arising between Student Council and Administration.



## The Student Council Advisor as the **SALESPERSON**

Perhaps one of the most challenging things to accomplish as the Student Council Advisor is to instill in the school community the need for a strong student activities program and a Student Council. Faculty members may see student activities as play-time compared to their classroom instruction and may resent students missing class time to take part in daily extracurricular activities with which it will invariably conflict. As the Student Council Advisor, every attempt should be made to try to limit these absences by perhaps not always using the same Student Council members, or simply by communicating to Faculty members well in advance of potential Student Council Member’s absence. Furthermore, the Student Council Advisor must ensure that Students communicate with their teachers and make every effort possible to regain class time missed. The Advisor should also educate and inform Faculty members as to the importance of such student leadership opportunities. Just as with the Administration, the Advisor must demonstrate to the faculty the benefits of their Students being involved. Several suggestions on how to make this happen may be to include Faculty in Student Council functions and to implement an ongoing Faculty Appreciation Program.



## The Student Council Advisor as the **FUNDRAISER**

Once the objectives of the school year are selected, money becomes a big concern. The best projects, activities, and events sometime must be rejected because of a lack of funding. Smaller and less complex projects, activities and events, must sometimes be adopted instead. Money problems involve the following: budgeting process, the fundraising activity, and the spending of the funds. Funds can be raised in four different ways: 1) by requesting that the administration provide the capital from funds allocated to the school by the school district 2) by selling a product such as: candy, t-shirts, balloons, photos, etc. 3) by selling a service or talent such as: car wash, talent show, dance, dinners, house painting, etc. 4) by asking for donations or grants. Fundraising guidelines that adhere to school and district policies should be set up around activities which meaningfully involve Student Council members. Fundraising ideas should come from the students rather than be imposed by administration or staff. It is important to remember that although student monies belong to the school and are audited by the school, they should be spent on projects and events that benefit all students but not projects that should be funded by School District.

Student leaders can learn a tremendous amount concerning money if they are given the experience and opportunity to be involved in the entire fundraising process. Student Council members should be aware of the financial condition of their organization and the amount of power/suggestion they have over the disbursement of these funds. There are many policies, procedures, and laws that govern school student activity funds; these should be checked carefully by the Advisor and the Student Council Treasurer to make certain the Student Council is in compliance.

Advisors have to be aware of School District policies, procedures, and philosophy. Advisors should also know the attitudes of the people who serve in administration and also know their own strengths and limitations. Financial issues can make a Student Council Advisor bitter, especially when Student Council members enthusiastically work to the bone to earn funds, only to have the money used for a cause which is unrelated to their goals. As Student Council Advisors we must be concerned about money. We must consciously teach Student Council members the procedures of budgeting, predicting, choosing the projects, depositing the funds, and managing their costs, and watching their money work in what is commonly hoped to be positive ways. Students are rarely aware of how quickly their funds will diminish, and at the same time, they have a great sense of justice, fairness, and honesty about money.



## **IN SUMMARY!!!**

The primary task of the Student Council Advisor is to work with and through Student Leaders to carry out a phase of their civic education and enhance their leadership skills. Officers and committee chairs will meet with the Student Council Advisor frequently, either individually or in groups, sometimes at regularly scheduled hours, other times by chance. Individual students will confer with the Student Council Advisor on group business, whether or not they are members of the group. Often informal sessions will help the Student Council Advisor to keep their finger on the pulse of public opinion with regard to the Student Council.

The Student Council Advisor is a resource person, a leader to all of the members of the Student Council. One of the greatest tools in preparing student leaders to accept the challenges in later life is that leadership learned through active participation in organization and it is the Student Council Advisor more than anyone else on campus that has the greatest potential to positively facilitate and promote this process. The Student Council Advisor walks a delicate line between realist and spoilsport, loyal supporter and traitor. Keeping this balance depends upon the Advisor's expressed common sense, training, and dedication to organizational principals and practices.