

PASTA NEWSLETTER

46 - February 2005

PASTA is the acronym of the Professional Association of Student Representative Council Teacher/Advisors. Founded in New South Wales, Australia, in February 1995, our Association exists to support in whatever ways possible those who work with and support programs of student participation, representation and leadership.



SEE OUR MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION AND APPLICATION FORM ON THE WEBSITE

PASS THE PASTA

Over the next twelve months we would like to look at how you can develop in your SRC members some of the skills that will make them a better and/or more effective member of the school's leadership team.

How many times as the SRC adviser have you heard someone say: "I wish I didn't have to go to this meeting - they're so boring; we never get anything done; all we do is argue; it's a waste of time, etc." (any or all of the above). This issue we are looking at ways in which you can improve the meetings that you hold. While these ideas won't provide instant success, things like having regular meetings, ensuring that they start on time and have a purpose, that people are able to put forward suggestions without fearing putdowns, that things - once decided on - are followed up, that there is a record of what has happened at the meeting, will all help. Let us know what you think of the suggestions in the following article on *Effective Meetings*.

We hope that future topics will include what you could do while the meeting is in progress, planning an activity, constitutions, decision making and problem solving, etc. However, to ensure that we all get the most from this, I would like your help. If your SRC is successful and you have ideas that are working, write and not only let me know but help others who feel they are struggling as well.



PASTA AGM

The PASTA AGM is due to be held on February 25th at Asquith Girls High School, starting at 10.30 am. Over the years the executive numbers have dwindled as people have retired or moved on to other things. If you feel that you would like to have a say in the direction that student leadership in schools is taking, or you would just like to be a bit more involved, please feel free to join us.

One item for discussion at the AGM is to determine if we will proceed with a training day for SRC advisers similar to the one held last October and, if so, when and what might be offered. Again, suggestions for dates, program items, and willingness to attend and/or lead workshops would be appreciated. If you are interested and feel that there is a need for this sort of activity, let the secretary know via email at esheerin@ozemail.com.au

US Trip 2006

Plans for this year's leadership tour to participate in the United States national leadership program are now well under way. Highlights will include not only the national leadership conference in Philadelphia and the skills development camp at Lake Tahoe, but visits to the World Trade Fair site in New York City, seeing the July 4 celebrations in Washington DC, visits to American Civil War battle sites such as Gettysburg and Antietam, as well as the opportunity to be part of the lives of at least four different American families. If you or any of your students are interested there are still a limited number of positions available.

Ken Page, PASTA President

Check out 'How To Join' page on our Website:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

or contact the PASTA Secretary: esheerin@ozemail.com.au

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

As we start the school year we are faced with arguably the most common problem that we as advisers have to deal with: to ensure that not only do we have regular meetings with our SRC members, but to ensure that these meetings are effective and not just a waste of everybody's time. It is in meetings that attitudes and bonds are created and developed as the members formulate policies, make decisions, discuss ideas and chart progress.

It is often a struggle to find the time for your SRC to meet. With competing demands on time (both yours and the students), it is essential that when a meeting is held everyone is happy that the time was well used. In most cases the effectiveness of the meeting come down to the thoroughness of the planning that has gone in before the meeting is even held.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR MEETINGS

1. Be familiar with the constitution and by-laws and the concept of the group's activities as part of the total school curriculum.
2. Review the purposes, goals, and objectives of your organization and the kinds of activities that may assist in accomplishing them.
3. Be familiar with school policies and administration guidelines regarding student activities.
4. Understand the relationship of your organization to other organisations in and outside of school.
5. Have a basic handbook for all members of your organization that includes the above items as well as job descriptions, and to which agendas, minutes, and other special information may be added.
6. Always follow a business procedure during meetings.
7. Plan meetings cooperatively with the officers, members, and adviser.

PLANNING A MEETING

A meeting, whether it is of the whole organization or a committee, should have a well-thought-out plan to help ensure that goals are reached. Although meetings take many forms and serve many purposes, they all share some things in common. When planning the meeting, keep these things in mind:

Purpose of the meeting

Every meeting must have a purpose acceptable to its participants. If there is no real reason, don't hold the meeting! Sometimes the purpose is clearly stated, sometimes it's taken for granted. Do you want people to experience something? Learn something? Make decisions? Plan something? Consider various activities that will help accomplish your purpose, and structure your meeting to accomplish the purpose you have in mind.

People involved

Consider who will be present at the meeting. Are they familiar with the business at hand? How motivated will they be to participate? Answering these questions will help determine the activities of the meeting. Then consider who will be leading the activities.

Setting

Plan an atmosphere that will be conducive to participation and productivity. Consider such things as size of room, arrangement of seating, lighting, acoustics, temperature, and equipment needed.

Time Limit

Times of meetings vary greatly. How much can be dealt with in the time available? Plan your agenda so that everything can be handled within the time allowed.

HOW TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE MEETING

Taking each of these things into consideration when planning the meeting will ensure the meeting is productive.

One of the most important elements necessary for a successful meeting is a well-planned agenda. An agenda should be:

1. Planned with officers and members
2. A written outline of plans for the meeting
3. Listed in the order in which items are to be handled during the meeting, so if time runs out the most important matters will have been addressed.
4. Flexible; changes may be made with the consent of the group
5. Usually in the following order:

- Call to order
- Roll call
- Reading and approving minutes from the previous meeting
- Reports of committees: standing and special
- Unfinished business
- New business
- Program announcements
- Adjournment

There are many ways in which you can organise your meeting agenda. A formal or informal agenda can be planned, utilising whatever format is appropriate to the purpose of the meeting. A checklist is provided to help make sure no details are overlooked.

CHECKLIST

(NOTE - Not all items may be necessary for all meetings)

- Members have been notified well in advance the time, date, and location of the meeting.
- Letters of invitation have been sent to guest speakers or other non-members who are to attend the meeting. Include directions.
- An agenda is planned and copies are prepared for attendees.
- There are time estimates of how long each agenda item will take.
- People who will be leading activities or presenting information during the meeting have been notified ahead of time and understand what is expected of them.
- Committee reports or other handouts are ready and copied for participants.
- Room reservations have been made so there will be no conflict with another group trying to use the facility.
- Necessary equipment (microphone, slide projector, video player, etc.) has been tested to make sure it works.
- Layout of the room has been checked to make sure activities planned can be carried out there.
- Appropriate number of chairs, tables, etc. are available.

- Room set-up arrangements are made.
- Name tags are purchased and available.
- Copies of previous minutes are prepared.
- Visual aids are prepared.
- Refreshments are ordered.
- Meeting evaluation form is prepared **just before the meeting.**
- Seating is arranged according to plan.
- PA system is hooked up and working properly.
- Refreshments are ready.
- Name tags are available.
- Meeting evaluation forms are available.
- Other materials are available.
- Other:

Next time we will look at what you might be able to do while the meeting is in progress that will make your meetings better. If you have any tips that may help, please forward them to: suepage@ozemail.com.au

Ken Page

PASTA MEMBERSHIP

Tax Invoice: ABN 49 398 096 539

PASTA membership gets you a full year of regular publications, access to resource modules and professional development opportunities, while at the same time showing your real support for our main job of lobbying for more time, training, resources and recognition for SRCs and advisors.

A full membership form is on our Website's 'How To Join' page at:

<http://hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>

For now, just complete the details below and send your payment to:

**The Secretary, PASTA
50 Balmoral Drive
Gorokan, NSW 2263**

NAME: _____

CONTACT DETAILS: _____

TYPE (inc. GST):

Student/Concession (\$27.50)

Ordinary (\$55.00)

Organisation (\$88.00)

(indicate which)

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“PRINCIPLES AND PRINCIPALS”

In the final part of this article we look at ways in which Principals can assist the SRC adviser and the SRC to have a greater impact on the school culture.

Principled Principals' Potential

THE SRC/SLA ADVISER 'PROBLEM'

- Identification with a single adviser (who just happens to be interested) rather than a program position expected to be filled by a trained teacher in the field is the norm.
- Communication between schools and between SRCs - therefore the support network needed to sustain motivation as well as access useful human and material resources - has been made difficult by a lack of profile, by an established precedent for it and by in-house assistance in overcoming bureaucratic hurdles to achieve it.

CAN BE MET BY THE PRINCIPAL OPPORTUNITY

- To make maximum impact in the positive use and sustainability from year to year of this invaluable resource
- To follow up the enthusiastic responses by principals to the 1995 student speeches and individual discussions with students at the 2nd International Confederation of Principal's Conference with practical actions at the grass root level

SO THAT

- Advisers become recognised as also teachers of a valid subject and / or teachers of leadership skills in general in addition to other accepted KLA or grade or other duties
- All concerned are in a position to access training and resources in this field
- Time and status assures the job is not 'extra' but an integral part of what schools do

IN ORDER TO ASSURE THAT IN FUTURE

- Student activities in the student leadership area are justifiable, reportable curriculum
- Civics and Citizenship education crosses curriculum boundaries and includes active citizenship projects such as those carried out by SRCs, Peer Support programs etc

- The skills and attitudes expected and developed from and by well-developed and supported SRCs/Leadership Teams etc are fundamentally the same ones practiced and expected in normal classroom, job and life situations, i.e. Personal Development/Self-Awareness/Problem-Solving/Decision-Making/Organisational Techniques/Group Process/Multicultural Awareness/Goal Setting/Volunteering/Community Involvement/Civics and Citizenship Responsibility/Communication/National and International Awareness/Networking/Teamwork/Project Planning/Leadership Development/Value Clarification/Concern for Physical Environment/Use of Resources/Commitment/Assessment and Evaluation Techniques/Evaluations and Action Research/Conflict Resolution/Communication with Different Ages and Audiences/Diplomacy/Representation/Meeting Skills/Reflective Skills/Awareness of Cultural Environment/Vision
- The more that happens in the 'classroom' is extended to include the recognition that what happens in SRC etc activities is 'the classroom', the more the reverse positive benefits occurs - that is, students leading other students
- SRC / Student Leadership structures provide a framework for student involvement in long-term planning, scheduling, promotion, coordination and balancing of all other activity projects

This is a summary of several PASTA papers circulated since 2002. Detailed submissions and list of documentation sources are available from:

Charles Kingston, PASTA Vice-President

The PASTA Newsletter is edited by Ken Page and distributed bi-monthly as a supplement to Connect magazine.

<http://www.hsc.csu.edu.au/pta/pasta/>