
PASTA NEWSLETTER

47 - April 2006

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

A recent GOOGLE search (search word: 'PASTA') surprised us. Instead of our Association site coming up first, as it used to, there was a new listing at the top of the page. Its site blurb reads:

"The official web site of the National Pasta Association provides pasta recipes, pasta facts, and nutritional information about pasta."

Well what do you know? While this new parallel universe namesake is about the real Italian thing, whereas SRCs should be about involvement with and by the whole delicious multicultural mix of our society, in a metaphorical sense, both our Associations are on about the same thing. **We both seek recipes for success. We both encourage giving and getting the best from our local product.**

This unexpected Net surprise immediately brought to mind two "Pass the Pasta" menu items. First, if you do a search for us - or direct others to do so (thank you very much) - try the right one. Since our formation in 1995-96, "P.A.S.T.A. Australia" has always been our legally constituted name. Not 'P.A.S.T.A. NSW', not anything else. (See full address above. Or simply search for 'PASTA SRC'.)

Second, and of much greater long-term significance, continue to think in terms of the national implications and potential benefits of having a strong, diverse group of member advisers and schools working for the benefit of student leadership activities. In whatever form (or name) it might develop over time, ten years down our hard and many-obstacled track of trying, we who are still active in P.A.S.T.A. Australia believe in it strongly. We believe there is a deep need and high educational value in supporting the advisers who maintain the programs. In a field which never has had - and probably

never will be recognised fully as a 'subject area' (with the consequent flow of curriculum materials and timetabled classroom provisions afforded more established 'subjects'), the provision of professional development resources and opportunities for advisers - and networking morale support - is essential.

So is communication of such, from those of you reading this column, and from those thousands of others who don't read, much less contribute to *Connect*. Or get in touch with each other. Or us. But should. Through all means available. And, like that other association's recipes, new methods we can all learn from and use. In the teaching biz, it used to be called 'collegiality'. It's still why we provide - voluntarily and free of charge, without regard to the system or state - the kind of resources we can.

Silence from others is a sad practical and emotional fact we have hard learned through the consistent lack of communication to us from so many working in this area. Whether within a single SRC itself, from state governments to teacher groups such as ours or between groups working towards similar ends in different states, the lack of sound is the same. Invaluable planning of activities - with the potential for valuable feedback prior to them - does not include consultation with others outside the group. Likewise, with some notable exceptions who do write sometimes for this publication even if they don't share directly in other ways, the often outstanding work that does go on too often seems to stop when the project is over. Who else knows about it? If not, why not?

So what's "Pass the PASTA" really mean? Hopefully some useful hints passed on to you, like this issue's second instalment in our series on 'Effective Meetings'. Or the detailed suggestions on how to put together an SRC 'classroom' folder. Or your hoped for attendance at one of our PD Days. (Contact our Secretary for details.)

Hopefully also it means encouraging both your students and your advisers to avail themselves of the international opportunities provided by our annual Overseas SRC Leadership Tours. Amongst other skills workshops and SRC-sponsored host school visits, this year's delegation is attending the 70th National Association of Student Councils Conference. **That's 70 years of national cooperation in the student leadership business.**

The structure and cultural accents vary abroad, but that sustained sort of long-term, widely supported national cooperation and communication is what "Pass the PASTA" really hopes can happen here in Australia. It should have happened by now. If they are to thrive at all, this nation's future active citizens must be nourished by it. It's what our nutritional recipes for greater SRC recognition and time and resources and status for SRC Advisers hope to lead to. We'd love to sit at the table with you.

This was the vision (and became the legal reality) when we started. This was the hope and projection voiced repeatedly by one of our Co-Founders, Ralph Murray, when he wrote these "Pass The PASTA" columns while our Foundation President. This always has been and remains this Association's fundamental ethos.

Charles Kingston
PASTA Vice-President

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS 2

In the February issue we briefly outlined some matters in regard to these aspects of meetings: "GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR MEETINGS" / "PLANNING A MEETING" / "HOW TO HAVE AN EFFECTIVE MEETING" and a "CHECKLIST" (ie details not to be overlooked before the meeting takes place). In this issue we look at some responsibilities of officers and some of the ways meetings can effectively be conducted without resorting to formal parliamentary procedures.

The next time we address this topic we will examine in more detail the vexed but necessary question of educating students to become familiar and comfortable using parliamentary procedures. Another issue will provide some guidelines for relevant evaluations of your meetings. Finally, we propose to look at dealing with 'problem people' and ways to make the most of your leadership meeting skills.

We welcome feedback on successful techniques you are using and/or other questions you have.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES AT MEETINGS

Student leaders should have specific responsibilities for all tasks at all meetings of their group. Likewise, both officers and ordinary members should not only contribute to the conduct of the meeting but lead most of the focused talking, writing and skills building activities. If your practice is to have a regular Adviser Report – and it's on the agenda - that should be seen as more or less the same as a Committee Chairperson's Report. If not a regular practice, then the Adviser(s) should be prompted by necessary questions from student members. An exception would be if the group is going totally off the track and pursuing something the Adviser knows is either illegal or totally impractical. Obviously also, if the Principal or another staff or community member is invited as a guest, this too is an exception (hopefully a planned one) to the normal student-led discussion.

That philosophical/practical viewpoint reiterated, here are some specific jobs for specific officers: These and additional material that follows are from resources within the public domain.

- 1. Presiding officers: President and Vice-President:** Calls the meeting to order; Recognises members; Re-states questions; Announces results of voting; Decides on points of order.
- 2. Secretary:** Records facts, decisions; Puts items of business considered in writing.
- 3. Treasurer:** Reports on financial condition of the group; Advises on the amount of funds available for specific projects.
- 4. Committee chairpersons:** Responsible to council; Responsible for committee meetings; Responsible for committee reports; Responsible for assignment from council.
- 5. Members:** Use the rules to the best advantage of the group; Are informed about the rules.



ALTERNATIVES TO PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE

If your small group chooses not to follow the strict form of parliamentary procedure, it might use some form of 'interactional discussion'. Interactional discussion in small groups involves direct, easy interchange. Members speak up without waiting for recognition by the leader, and each communicator is aware of every other person and his or her reaction.

This has many variations. Among them are: action planning, interaction method, informational conferences, roundtable discussions, panel discussions, symposiums, buzz groups, cooperative investigations, brainstorming, operation under house rules, lecture-presentation, and open forums.

Action Planning

This informal strategy helps groups make plans to achieve goals. A team of people develops a new action plan to handle a situation or solve a problem, or evaluates and updates an existing plan. Each team fills in a job chart that details each member's task responsibilities. Consensus without formal voting is usual.

Interaction Method

This system uses a facilitator and recorder to post the group agenda, give ground rules, and help with interaction and participation. The facilitator keeps the group focused and keeps it on track. The recorder writes down group members' ideas on butchers paper, posted so people can clearly see their recorded words. This method is effective because it fosters participation of all members of the group, and consensus is built by sharing ownership of plans.

Informational Conferences

An informational conference is a scheduled meeting at which all participants share their personal knowledge or experience to make both the group and the individuals composing it more efficient in their work. The informational conference differs from the problem-solving conference in that its goal is to

produce information only, not to isolate, examine, and solve a problem. It may, however, increase group knowledge about a problem.

Roundtable Discussion

'Roundtable' refers to a closed discussion with an informal organisation. It is used by groups that are trying to achieve a specific goal or solve a problem. Members meet, with or without a chairperson, and start talking. Their discussion may be structured, with an introduction and a conclusion, or it may be hit-or-miss. There are no auditors or observers.

Panel Discussion

A panel of from three to eight participants is selected to carry on a discussion in front, and partially for the benefit of, an audience. Their method is a sort of structured conversation, usually, though not necessarily, led by a designated chairperson. The audience may be allowed to ask questions or enter into the discussion while it is under way or after the panel has finished.

Symposium

A number of people, often experts in some aspect of the subject under consideration, are each invited to make short speeches. When all have spoken, participants may ask questions or make statements in regard to what another has said. The audience may be invited to join in.

Buzz Groups

After a general presentation or discussion (or even prior to a program), the large group is divided into groups of six or eight persons. Each of these buzz groups is asked to consider a specific question. All the small groups may be answering the same question, or each may examine a different question, and each group selects a leader and/or recorder. At the end of the allotted period, the leader of each buzz group presents the group's report to the whole assembly. In this way, every individual takes an active role in deliberation, even though his or her contribution is filtered through the reporter of the buzz unit.

Brainstorming

The unique purpose of brainstorming is to encourage the creation and expression of original ideas for the solution of a difficult problem.

Since the emphasis is on quantity and not quality, the ideas are not evaluated during the brainstorming session. By taking the pressure of judgment off the group, imaginations can be stirred to move outside wellworn pathways and look for

previously unimagined possibilities.

The following ground rules should be strictly enforced in brainstorming:

1. Every person is encouraged to offer as many ideas as possible.
2. Ideas that 'hitchhike' on those already offered by someone else are encouraged.
3. No criticism or any kind of adverse reaction to any idea offered is permitted.
4. No evaluations are made at this meeting.

There are more such alternatives to strict parliamentary procedure. We will visit some in further issues.

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)

**Applications open now
for PASTA Overseas SRC
Leadership Tours 2007 and
the 3rd ISRC Tour in 2008.
Contact the PASTA Secretary
as below.**

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

It is both useful and appropriate for SRC advisers and members to think of their SRC work in many ways as an additional 'class'. Students accept the need for folders for timetabled classes. They also need equivalent SRC (or other leadership group) resources which they regularly use and update.

- Captains (and Leadership Teams, Peer Support etc) should have a similar folder.
- Items below, which PASTA feels are common to all such groups, are marked with an asterisk: *.
 - Standard spiral folders with 20 sleeves are normally easier to use than ring binders.
 - Staple together multi-page items that are used less often and put them inside one sleeve only.
 - The order of items presented here is designed to enable front and back copying.
 - Have several spare folders for visitors, for files, and for members who forget!

RECOMMENDED ITEMS FOR SRC MEMBER FOLDERS

- **Cover:** Clearly identifies group and member's name. Make them colourful. *
- **Page 1: Title page** (School logo, but also a good SRC and/or Leadership Team/Peer Support Group logo). *
- **Page 2: Table of Contents** (with or without page numbers as preferred). *
- **Page 3: SRC Members List** with positions and year. SRC Advisers and Year Advisers also listed. If committees exist, note members (abbreviate or use coded labels). *
- **Page 4: Separate list of Captains, Prefects and/or Leadership Team and/or Peer Support Group etc** (where these exist). Include all activity advisers on this also. *
- **Pages 5-8: School Calendars - Term 1 through to Term 4 (one page for each).** *
- **Pages 9-10: SRC (or other relevant group) Calendar *** (or page per term if preferred). A more detailed version of the School Calendar specific to the group. It should include all major SRC events also listed on the school calendar (eg regular meetings, skills workshops, major project days). In addition, it should have larger date/day spaces to insert committee meetings, smaller projects decided upon after the main school calendar is published, project planning due dates (as per assessment tasks for regular classes), state, national, international events/opportunities of significance.
- **Pages 11-12: SRC Constitution** (stapled in for removal as needed). If non-existent, make it a goal for the year to create a workable one. If the constitution is currently in process of revision, have this sleeve for draft documents as they develop. If there is a separate constitution for your Leadership Team and/or your School Council, make the cover of that be page 12.
- **Pages 13-14: Format for Standard Meeting Agenda/Roles of Officers at Meetings.**
- **Page 15: Collected Agendas for meetings** (once received, upcoming meeting one on top).
- **Page 16: Collected Minutes of your meetings** (Minutes of previous meeting - or representative notes thereon if system not smooth yet - placed on top for easy removal during meetings).
[If an SRC has an **Executive structure** and that Executive group meets regularly, a separate sleeve will be needed for those agendas and minutes. It should be left up to the Executive itself to determine if their records also need to be copied and placed in all SRC reps folders.]
- **Pages 17-18: Records of Committees to do with SRC Projects:** Matters pertinent to Committees in which each specific representative is involved. (Alternatively, if a group is especially active or wants to be better organised, the members should create their own separate folder for their committee work.)
- **Pages 19-20: Information on District, State, National and International Structures** which support SRCs and other student leadership curriculum programs (eg PASTA, **Connect**, District and State SRC, National Contacts, NASC, CASAA, OBESSU, Rotary, Lions, Local Council etc).

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/>