



## Transitioning the Officer Team

With the end of the school year looming on the horizon, thoughts inevitably turn to the future. As it sinks in that seniors soon will be leaving and eighth graders will be moving up to high school, student activity advisers realize that their clubs and organizations will be without the capable leadership of the officers and veteran members on whom they have come to depend. Instead of wailing “What will we do without them?” some careful preparation on the part of the adviser and officers before the end of the year will leave your organization primed to start over in a new school year.

### Wrap-up Reports

An important element in making the transition from this year’s officer team to next year’s is to require your current officers and committee chairs to prepare thorough wrap-up reports on their work and make sure that project files are complete. What did they accomplish this year? What advice or recommendations do they have for their successors?

### Job Descriptions

The person responsible for a job must know what that job is to perform it well. Obligations and responsibilities of officers, members, and committee chairs should be written down,

analyzed, and evaluated each year. The job description serves a threefold purpose:

1. It ensures that the person holding the job knows the responsibilities of the job.
2. It provides the basis for evaluating the performance of the person holding the job.



3. It establishes what is important in the organization so that resources can be organized accordingly.

Current officers and chairs should each review their job descriptions to ensure that the description matches the actual responsibilities of the position and make any needed changes.

### Leader’s Notebook

Working together, the adviser and officers should create or update a leader’s notebook for each key position in the organization. The notebook should contain essential information to enable the student leader to function effectively in his or her position. Items to cover in the

notebook include:

- Letter from adviser with description of expectations
- Organizational flowchart
- Job descriptions for officers, members, committee chairs, and adviser
- Roster of members and their addresses, phone numbers, e-mail addresses
- Constitution and bylaws
- Parliamentary procedure quick reference chart
- Committee information such as a description of standing committees, sample committee report forms, and a roster of members of each committee
- Calendar of regularly scheduled meetings
- List of special projects that are traditionally sponsored
- Resource list of important “How to’s”—how to complete a purchase order, get copies made, get an announcement on the P.A., schedule use of a school facility, get a custodian assigned for an after school activity, add an event to the school calendar, and so forth
- Samples of standard forms used such as minutes, publicity requests, treasurer’s reports, etc.
- Agenda planning instructions
- Motivational quotes
- Other pertinent information.

## Officer Meeting

Once all the information is prepared, schedule a meeting between the old officers and the new officers. Use this time to do some one-on-one training. The outgoing officers should explain what their job entails, hand over the leader's notebook, and offer tips on getting things done. They can also pass along tips on dealing with idiosyncrasies of the adviser, principal, and other faculty members that are best not written down. The outgoing officers have a wealth of knowledge that can be passed along to the incoming officers to make their jobs easier, but they should keep in mind that no one will do the job exactly as they have done it. They should allow room for creative input and suggestions on how to improve the position and encourage the new officers to put their stamp on the office.

## Leadership Training

In addition to information on their specific positions, your officers and other key leaders should receive training in basic leadership skills such as goal setting, project planning, meeting skills, team building, and communication. This training could be conducted in the spring, with a follow-up workshop in the fall, or it could be planned as a summer retreat. The format will vary depending on your needs and the time available. Some common types of workshops include a half-day or full-day session on a school day, either on campus or at an off-site location, an overnight lock-in, or a weekend event. Some schools organize a training

event for all the officers of student organizations, but it can also be done for a single organization. If you're conducting a workshop for all school clubs, be sure to schedule times for all the officers to get together and talk about their roles with those holding the same office in different groups. This is a particularly good time to train all the treasurers in the correct procedures for depositing funds, filling out purchase orders, paying bills, and other financial matters.

There are also state and national leadership camps where students can receive excellent training. Check with the executive director of your state organization for more information.

## Clear Expectations

When you have clearly defined the roles each officer in your organization will have, be sure each officer understands the responsibilities of his or her office. If there are any requirements such as attending a leadership camp or a retreat, service hours, number of events they must attend, and so forth, be sure these are clearly written down. It's a good idea to have officers—and members—sign a form stating they understand what is expected of them. Having the parents also sign to indicate they know what their child is responsible for is also a good idea.

## Transfer of Power

One other event that will facilitate the transfer from one year's officers to the next

is some sort of formal, public acknowledgement of the transfer of power. This could take the form of an installation ceremony, recognition at a banquet or awards ceremony, a newspaper article, or a listing in the student handbook. Also provide the new officers with some visible indicator of their position—stationary, business cards, a pin—so that when they represent your group in the community they have something official that identifies them as an officer.

Finally, smooth the way for your student leaders to work with the faculty and administration by scheduling a meeting with your principal to introduce your new officer team, and introduce them at a faculty meeting. Let the principal and faculty members know how much the student leaders are looking forward to working together with them in the coming year.

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