



Resolve to Renew

For most people, January is a good time to take stock of their lives and set resolutions for improvement. For educators, it always feels a little strange to be setting goals in January though—the year is half over for us. Instead of making new resolutions, January is a more appropriate time to assess the year so far and recommit to or revise goals we set at the real beginning of the year, back in August.

January marks the halfway point in most school calendars, which means you have at least as much time ahead of you as you have behind you. Taking time now to assess where you are and plan the rest of your year will enable you to have a much more successful year. Because before you know it, summer will be upon us and you'll wonder where the year went. So instead of resolving, now would be a good time to do the following:

❖ **Renew.** Often after the rush of fall and holiday activities, things seem to let down a bit. It becomes easier to put off

accomplishing objectives that seemed like a good idea in August but that now seem like they would take too much energy to accomplish. Take a look at those goals from August. How many are still meaningful to your group? What would you like to accomplish in the time remaining this year?



❖ **Revise.** As you look at your group's original goals, you'll probably find some things that aren't as important to you and some others that have cropped up that you didn't originally anticipate. Now would be a good time to revise the goals—get rid of those that no longer are important and add new ones that are.

❖ **Retreat.** Be realistic about what you will be able to accomplish. Are you overextended?

It's okay to retreat from what you originally planned if it's more than your group can handle.

❖ **Reenergize.** Perhaps this would be a good time for your group to do a mid-winter energizer to rekindle the enthusiasm you started with. Plan a lock-in or a weekend retreat with some teambuilding and leadership development activities. Or, register to take a delegation of students to a state or regional leadership conference.

❖ **Regroup.** Shake up your committees. Assess how effective the groups are and move members around. Offer everyone the chance to list their top three choices for alternate committee assignments and create new groupings. Working on something new might rekindle enthusiasm of members who have become lackadaisical with their efforts. Be sure to leave a few veterans on each committee who know the ropes and can help the new members learn what's what.

❖ **Recommit.** Offer people a new chance to get involved and commit to being a part of things. Many groups make big efforts in the fall to get

students involved, and by mid-year things are pretty settled. Students who may have missed the opportunity in the fall might be wishing now that they were involved. Make a new effort to seek participation. Have current members each bring a nonmember to a meeting or event, and make some announcements to let students know that new members are welcome.

❖ **Recruit.** Now is also a good time to start focusing on recruitment efforts for next year. If your group holds elections for officer positions, make an effort to reach diverse segments of the student body. Are all factions represented, or is the group dominated by a few cliques? Brainstorm with your student leaders some ways you can increase and diversify membership.

❖ **Record.** Don't forget to keep records of your activities. Officers and committee chairs should complete evaluations of each activity and compile information that will be useful for the next time you sponsor that activity. Keep copies of letters sent, purchase orders, custodial requests, financial transactions, announcements, student excused lists, altered bell schedules, and so forth. In the busy-ness of the fall season, were all the files completed that should have been?

❖ **Reserve.** Take a look ahead at activities that are on the calendar for the rest of the year. Have room reservations been made? Are contracts signed for DJs and outside vendors? Do you have enough funds in reserve to adequately carry out the activities?

❖ **Recognize.** Plan an end of year recognition banquet or other event to recognize the accomplishments of your student leaders. Start keeping a file with notes about each student and his or her special

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qualities and achievements so you won't have to wrack your brain for those pieces of information right before your recognition event. Being able to give specific details makes recognitions more personal and meaningful.

❖ **Recall.** Plan now to look back on the activities and accomplishments of the year with a scrapbook or multimedia slide show. Taking photos and videos and saving memorabilia should be an ongoing effort and not put off until the end of the year. A multimedia show

or a movie of the events your group sponsored this year might be a good project for students to undertake now, while there is still time to organize it.

❖ **Recommend.** Which of your student leaders would you recommend take part in summer leadership workshops or national conferences? Gather information about the opportunities available and let your student leaders know about them so they can begin making plans—summer schedules fill up fast.

❖ **Report.** Keep a running list of accomplishments so you will be prepared for an end of year report to the faculty on your achievements. Or, plan for monthly reports at faculty meetings or with principals. Faculty and administrators will be more supportive of your organization if you can show that your members are working to achieve significant goals.

❖ **Recess.** Take a break. Stress relief is important, too. Remember, there is as much of the school year ahead of you as there is behind you—don't burn out too soon! Eat well, get some rest, do something fun away from your job, and reconnect with family and friends.

Resolve now to make the rest of the year a success. Good luck!