

The Student Leader

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Make it a December to Remember!

December is such an exciting time of year. There is a major break from the hustle and bustle of the school year, parades, presents, and spending quality time with family. It is a time to be grateful for all that you have and to bestow joy on those around you.

"Paying it Forward" has been getting a ton of press lately. It is amazing how buying someone's coffee can completely change their day. The other night, my family and I were out to dinner. Whenever we go out, we see a ton of students that my husband and I have taught in the past. This particular night, I saw a student that I had 10 years ago when he was a sophomore. He was recently engaged and doing awesome. We chatted a bit and went back to our meals.

When we went to get our check, it was already taken care of. The server told us that my former student had taken care of our bill on his way out. It was such a kind gesture. I messaged him later that evening to thank him. His response is what truly made my night. "You are so very welcome! It was the least I could do for everything you have done for me and everyone else who has the privilege of having you as a teacher."

This comment was fuel for my soul. Please never discount the power of your words. Use them to inspire and empower. I am not suggesting that you always buy your teachers food or presents (although when you are a grown-up I am sure they would love that too), I am asking that you let those around you know how much they mean to you.

So much is asked of educators today. However, those that stick with it do so because of one thing...the kids! Your words are fuel to keep your teachers going.

Enjoy your break!

Andrea Vail, VSCA Director

Adviser Workshop

Alicia White, Adviser
Grassfield High School

On November 6, 2015, the Virginia Student Councils Association provided an advisor workshop to over 50 advisors from across the state. Executive Director of the New Jersey Association of Student Councils, Lou Miller, was the keynote speaker of the workshop. Mr. Miller provided a wealth of knowledge on topics ranging from the mission of your student council, how to make your time count, learning from your mistakes, using technology, and lessons from his summer road trip.

He asked the advisors to analyze the purpose and mission of their student councils. We reflected on a few key questions that I believe every advisor and student should do prior to a new school year or even as a midyear evaluation. What is your purpose? What is your mission? Lastly, examine what your student council really does? Using a 2 by 2 matrix, we placed projects and fundraisers into boxes to evaluate their purposes. The matrix compared money and mission from a low to high scale. This helped to see what projects aligned to or exemplified the mission of the council or ones that were not relevant and draining resources.

Between each topic, Mr. Miller provided examples of tweener activities. These activities allowed advisors to connect and move around. My favorite tweener was the battle of the bands. I shared this activity with my student council members and they enjoyed playing so much that played during a Chesapeake Citywide SCA Meeting.

I am thrilled that I was given the opportunity to attend this workshop. Mr. Miller provided an entertaining conference with new ideas that I was able to take back to my school to implement immediately. Growing as a leader can be difficult when there is only one student council advisor per building. Being able to connect with other advisors, share ideas, and reflect on our own leadership skills are important components to moving our student councils forward and in the right direction.

I look forward to other opportunities like this one in the future and hope to continually learn and grow as a leader.



Elementary and Middle School Workshop

Ryan Thomas, VSCA President

Woodgrove High School

On November 6th, 2015, the Virginia Student Councils Association hosted two workshops at the Double Tree Hotel in Williamsburg, VA—the setting of our ninetieth annual state convention this April. On the left side of the hall, advisors were led by the Director of the New Jersey Student Council Association and spent the day delving into what it means to be an advisor and their role in student council. They dropped a few beats in a freestyle Riff-Off. I had the pleasure of meeting several of the advisors, who were excited to take what they learned back to their home schools.

On the right side of the hall, in which I had the great pleasure of assisting, were the energized and enthusiastic elementary and middle school students in the VSCA Elementary and Middle School Workshop. As the annual state convention is sometimes too much for our younger leaders to handle, Ms. Trott, principal of Cedar Road Elementary, planned a day of equally exciting and impactful lessons. We spent the morning dwelling on the meaning of leadership, highlight service and the inclusion of others in our student council projects. As we explored the lessons of leadership, our next generation of leaders collaborated in several group activities, applying their lessons thoughtfully and expertly. To keep our energy at a max, myself and Vice President Taylor Overton led energizers and group ice breakers to pump up the sixty students who made the trek to Williamsburg. After a well-deserved lunch, we finished with reflections of our lessons and took a lesson from YouTube sensation, Kid President. It was a fantastic day, something I hope will grow in the years to come. A huge thank you to Ms. Trott, Mrs. Vail and the hotel staff for their accommodations in making the day a success on both sides of the hallway.

Next stop on the VSCA agenda is our annual state convention. Our advisory board is working hard to plan a special weekend for our ninetieth meeting. We hope you will join us; all forms are available online.



Liberty High School SCA and Nursing Home Pen Pals

By: Liberty High School, Region 5 Representative School

At the beginning of each school year, the Liberty High School Student Council contacts the activities director at an area nursing home and requests a list of residents who would like to become pen pals with high school students. This year, English Gardens-Elks Home was chosen. During each SCA meeting, students, who wish to participate, write letters to their nursing home pen pals. The letters are then delivered to the nursing home by volunteers and responses are picked up. On December 10, 2015, students with pen pals were allowed to travel to the nursing home by school bus to visit for the holidays. The time was spent chatting and enjoying snacks with the residents. A spring visit is also planned. Many students have developed friendships with their pen pals and plan to continue to write and visit when school is out.

