

DEFINITION: Student Council Advisor

The Student Council Advisor has one of the greatest responsibilities in the school. The Advisor is in the position to do unlimited good or irreparable harm. Personal attitudes influence the student leaders of the school and eventually the entire student body. Here at our disposal is the best instructional aid for teaching democratic principles, yet if it is misused students will turn away from the very system it pretends to support. Today's students are sensitive to the discrepancy between preaching and practicing. The Student Council Advisor is a person in a very unique role. Feelings, attitudes, prejudices, are constantly on display before a very critical audience.

The Student Council Advisor must be alert to the influences affecting the student body, the student heart, and the student mind. One of the jobs of the Advisor is to teach by example, to lead with wisdom, and to inspire with enthusiasm. One of the most important functions of the Advisor is to add adult maturity to the Student Council. The Advisor has the greatest amount of experience in working with people and with this background can be essential in helping Student Council Leaders to predict the outcomes of their action or even inaction. The Advisor walks a fine line between realist and spoilsport, loyal supporter, and traitor. Keeping personal balance depends upon common sense and dedication to Student Council principles and practices – to education, leadership development, and the welfare of students and the viable life of the school.

The Student Council Advisor must do a considerable amount of “behind the scenes” work. A Junior High Advisor will usually give direct support, while a Senior High Advisor requires a more subtle approach. In all cases, the Advisor must coach and develop the membership and the leadership of the Student Council. Members and officers must know their duties and responsibilities as well as be reminded about them occasionally. The Student Council Advisor must predict when officers and members might need to think things through before submitting decisions to a vote. This function can be encouraged by having Executive Committee meetings frequently.

Often Student Leaders may lack ability and/or knowledge, be lazy, or be emotionally pressured to perform contrary to the best interest of the Council or even the school. The Student Council Advisor must stimulate clear thinking and responsible action by all the members of the Student Council. The Advisor must become an expert at counseling the youth, often at a moment's notice. The Student Council Advisor should do his/her best to stop negative rumblings before they start and if these rumblings have already started coordinate damage control to steer the Council towards a more productive and positive direction. Students tend to make spur of the moment decisions and plunge ahead, therefore Student Council Advisors need to encourage more cautious and positive deliberations.

A good Student Council Advisor must keep the Council fully aware of the rules and regulations of the school and district, of the Council constitution, of the organization and its main basic objectives. A good library of ready reference material, whether in written or electronic format will be of considerable assistance? Each officer and member of the Student Council must be fully aware of the fundamental Council purposes as discussions begin on objectives for the year, special projects and concerns, best utilization of people power and the best methods of getting students involved. Projects can be selected on a basis of common concern, however conviction of personal responsibility is essential. A pattern of total commitment to the decisions of the group is desirable, and a full thorough approach to problem solving is necessary that all members might perform responsibly.

The Constitution that guides the Student Council should indicate the necessary standing committees and the procedure for appointing other committees. Committees need to be reminded of their purposes, their responsibilities, their deadlines and their necessity to meet. The Advisor needs to keep close track of committee functions to make sure they don't go beyond their authority while meeting their responsibilities. Committees need to be reminded constantly to submit written reports and to evaluate their own operations. Be alert to the need to add new committees. The Student Council Advisor is the indirect leader, committees must be carefully selected for balanced, workable membership; may include student volunteers outside the Council membership; their jobs must be clear and practical; deadlines must be realistic. Suggestions must be gently submitted as idea stimulators for developing student leadership, responsible membership and purpose-oriented procedures.

The Student Council Advisor's job is a "tight wire" - giving students support and full concerned attention, but protecting faculty/administrative interests in fulfilling the aims of the school. The Advisor must resist temptation to become a Student Council Member themselves - but must maintain communication among all the elements of the school community. Overall the Student Council Advisor has the toughest job in the school - definitely a challenge - but most assuredly one of the most rewarding experiences as an educator.