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ABSTRACT

The events of the five years 1967-1971 stimulated some of the best thinking the student council movement had seen to that time. This anthology is an attempt to capture some of that thinking. Important themes emerge from these articles: (1) a humanistic concern for the people student councils are meant to serve, (2) the reform movement, and (3) increased student participation in all aspects of student life. The authors of the articles include three students, two principals, two advisors, two college students, a student, and a principal writing together, and two professionals from the main office of "Student Life Highlights." (Author/PC)

# strength from the storm

Best of **Highlights** 1967-1971

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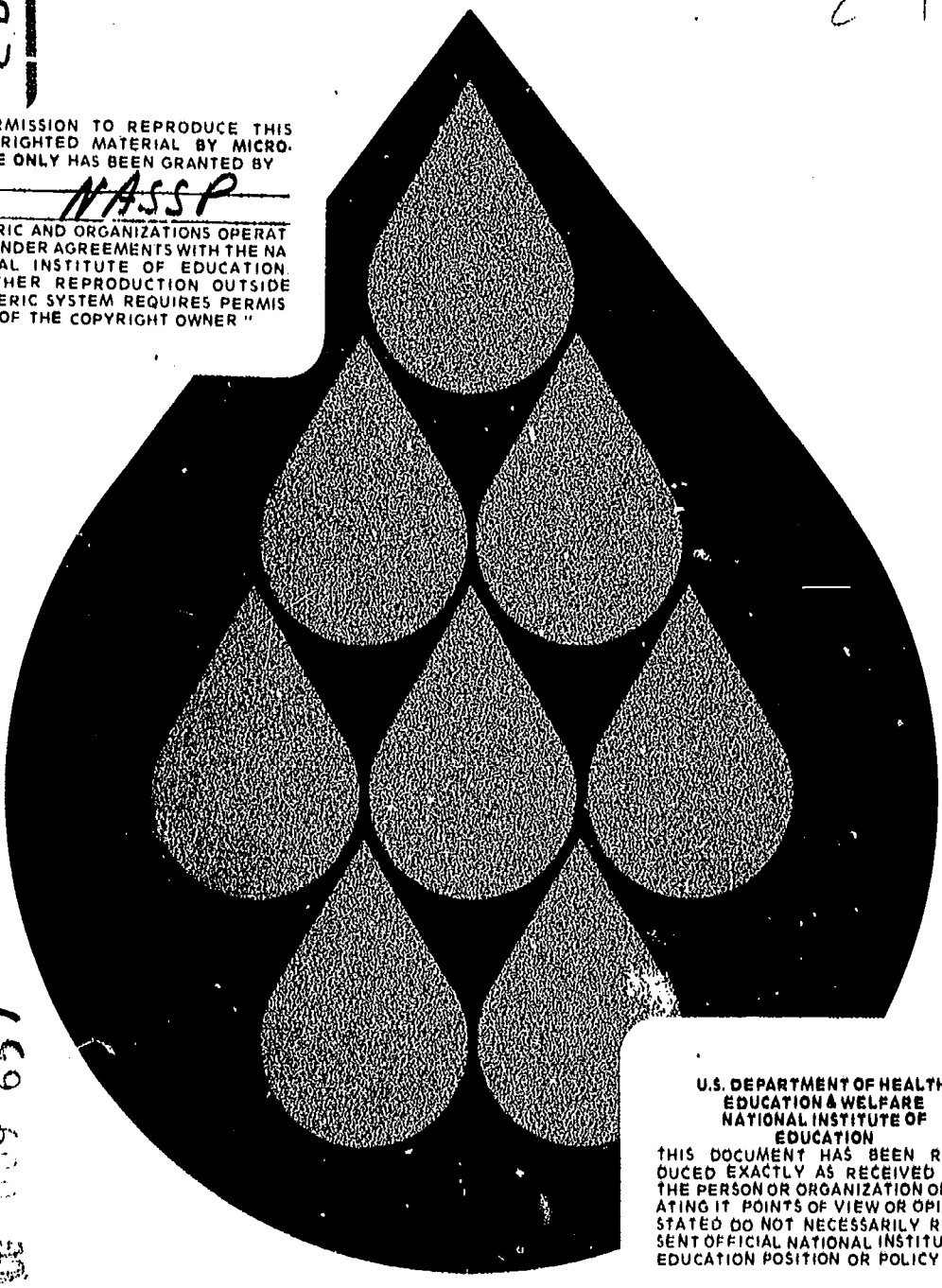





New directions for student councils

Number sixteen

# *Strength from the Storm*

Best of *Student Life Highlights*
1967-1971

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS
1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036

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# Contents

# Foreword

The last five years have seen a storm of protest in America. The storm began in the colleges, but the cold rain which it showered on the high schools soon broke into a much wider storm with thousands of high school campuses feeling its full fury. In the process, student councils were boycotted, ignored, destroyed, and remodelled as the winds swept around and through them. Few were left untouched.

The anguish, frustration, hope, and tireless work which went into meeting the storm comprise a human document of great importance. But perhaps more significant for us in the '70's is that the storm gave us strength. It blew the walls down and left us critically examining and rethinking our purposes and structures. In doing so, we gained a new dedication and direction for our tasks.

One new direction which we welcome is the increased participation of students in the life of the school. This is the key to the improved communication and mutual understanding which the storm taught us we needed. This anthology is itself representative of the kind of teamwork which we should be building. The authors include three students, two principals, two advisers, two college students, a student and a principal writing together, and two professionals from our own offices.

We are proud that *Highlights* has been such an accurate barometer of the student council movement, and we hope that an increasing number of our schools will make use of the hundreds of articles which appear in its full pages.

Owen B. Kiernan
*Secretary*
National Association of Student Councils
*Executive Secretary*
National Association of Secondary School Principals

# Introduction

The events of the last five years have stimulated some of the best thinking the student council movement has ever seen. This anthology is an attempt to capture some of that thinking. It is a tribute to the concern and articulateness of the individual writers, and to their editors at *Student Life Highlights*, Richard P. Harland and his successor Judith P. Martin.

Important themes emerge from these articles. For example, there is a humanistic concern for the people student councils are meant to serve. Are we relating to our fellow students, are we listening to them, are we serving their needs? The articles by Fred T. Wilhelms ("Brothers' Keepers?"), John O'Brien ("Thoughts for a New Student Council President"), and Allan A. Glatthorn ("An Open Letter to a High School Student") thoughtfully probe our deficiencies in reaching out to people.

There is also the theme of reform. When the storm of protest began to sweep the nation, it revealed thousands of inefficient councils, and thousands more which were disconnected from the interests and attitudes of their student bodies. Gerald M. Van Pool had seen the storm clouds on the horizon when he asked ("Twenty Years of Challenge and Change"): "How many councils have developed a realistic program to attract those who seldom participate in anything—the left-outs? . . . How many councils can say, truthfully, that they are the voice of the student body?"

The reform movement sought to define what a student council should do, whom it should serve, and how it could make the system work, so that protest would be unnecessary. Joseph N. Drury analyzed events on the West Coast ("Report from California: Student Revolt and the Student Council"), and this author made recommendations based on a tour of high schools and state conventions in New England ("Will Student Councils Die?"). That many councils were not able to absorb change, while still others did not benefit from the support of committed workers, is a message brought home forcefully by Raymond Paul ("Obituary for a Student Council").

Even while the storm winds were blowing the hardest, a new theme was beginning to appear: increased student participation in all aspects of school life. Scott Thomson recommended ways to channel student energies instead of blocking them ("Programs for Protesters"); Mimi Scheiber described a week of school which was planned by students ("Experiment in Free Form Education: Student-Designed Curriculum"); and Rick Sutton wrote of the Student-Teacher Coalition he initiated, involving both students and teachers in the administrative process ("Student Government that Works"). The concept of student councils as active agents in the educational

process may be the great contribution which the 1970's will make to the student council movement.

Joann N. Bodurtha and Dr. Harold E. Healy describe the way in which one student council was able to adapt and change without losing its stride ("Ridgefield Student Council: Alive and Well and Working for Change"). Throughout the cold rain, the storm, and the aftermath, our greatest resource has been the desire of young people to lead and create a better world for themselves. Steve Wieckert, our youngest contributor, raises his enthusiastic voice above five years of turmoil and offers his solution: "Creating an Action Council—Now."

PROLOGUE

# Twenty Years of Challenge and Change

GERALD M. VAN POOL

In looking back over the past 20 years, I am much encouraged by the progress we have made in the student council movement. The student council is now the foremost, the most prestigious, student organization in the entire school. Nowadays, it is not at all unusual for the student council president to meet regularly with the principal or sit in on an occasional faculty meeting. Student council representatives meet with civic leaders to consider plans for community improvement or to advise them on youth problems.

Student councils are often charged with important responsibilities and entrusted with difficult problems. Decisions of the council are considered seriously and their suggestions are given careful attention. Many councils are in charge of the activity program, make up the schedule of events, charter clubs, arrange assemblies, organize a social program, publish a handbook or directory, and participate regularly in programs for the development of responsible participation and self-discipline. . . .

## *The State Associations*

An outstanding development of the past 20 years is the usefulness and effectiveness of state associations of student councils. In 1947, there were about 18 loosely organized state associations, none affiliated with NASC. If I remember correctly, there was only one state (Virginia) that had a full-time, paid secretary. In other states, the person in charge of the state association was generally the student council adviser in the school where the annual convention was to be held. This person held office for only one year—through the convention—and then the position was passed on to the next year's host adviser who, similarly, held the position for only one year.

It is easy to see that this plan did not provide for much guidance or direction and certainly no continuity. One of the great accomplishments of the past twenty years has been the organization, or reorganization, of the state associations of student councils. Obviously, some associations are better organized and function better than others. But there is (or has been) an association in every state, and all are now affiliated with NASC. Some secretaries now give almost full time to state association work and most are

*Gerald M. Van Pool retired in January, 1971, after 23 years of service as NASSP Director of Student Activities.*

paid something, anywhere from $100 to $1500 a year. Many associations are now under the direction and control of other groups, such as the state education association, the state activities association, or the principals' association.

Under the direction of competent state secretaries, state associations now provide a wide variety of services, such as an annual convention, summer workshops, publications, clearinghouse service, and field service. Secretaries now meet twice yearly to discuss their common problems: once in January and again in June at the annual NASC Conference.

### *Director of Student Activities*

Just as the states have realized the need for a professional person to head the state program, many schools have found it wise to add a director of student activities to their staff. He is a professional person, generally a member of the school's administrative staff, who may teach no classes at all or teaches only part time. Generally, he has his own office and enough free time and clerical help to plan, coordinate, and direct the school's activity program. This position is probably more common in larger schools that may have as many as 100 different activities. The position has much to recommend it, as the director must schedule events, keep orderly records, maintain a judicious balance among the various types of activities, and keep close watch on everything to make certain that all clubs and groups are actually contributing something to student development. California now has a state association of directors of student activities.

### *The Summer Workshop*

Another new development which has helped to upgrade the entire activities movement is the summer workshop. No one is exactly sure where and when the first workshop was held, but Arkansas is usually given credit for it. Anyway, many people from other states came to Conway, Arkansas, to see what was going on and returned home filled with enthusiasm. One by one, other states set up their own summer programs until by the summer of 1967 there were over 80 workshops in 43 states.

Workshops may differ somewhat in techniques and program but all follow the same general pattern. They are held for a week at a camp or on a college campus where trained leaders teach classes and conduct demonstrations just as they would do in a normal school session. Some of the many subjects studied are parliamentary procedure, leadership training, evaluation, publicity, projects, finance, problem solving, speech, and many others. It is estimated that well over 10,000 student council members attend summer workshops every year. In 1964, NASC opened its first national workshop, patterned after the one that had been operated for many years by the Denver Public Schools at Camp Cheley, near Estes Park, Colorado. This workshop was so successful that a second one was opened in the summer of 1967 at Camp Couchdale in Arkansas.

Many schools now set up their own local leadership training workshop for the benefit of incoming student council members and any officers of school clubs that are interested. Meetings are scheduled for any convenient

time, such as after school, on Saturdays, or on successive evenings. Faculty members are students who attended the annual NASC Conference, a state workshop, a national workshop, or took part in some other leadership training session. The topics are generally about the same as are taught in state workshops but are tailored to the needs of student officers in school clubs, rather than concentrating on student council problems. Such workshops are especially helpful in those schools in which the student council charters all school clubs.

### *Growth of NASC*

All of these activities have helped in the growth of NASC. In 1947, there were about 1800 member schools but now there are almost 10,000 of them, located in every state and in some foreign countries. Even so, NASC does not yet enroll as many schools as it should. There are over 30,000 secondary schools in the United States and it would seem that at least half of them ought to hold NASC membership, to be part of their own national organization.

### *Challenges of the Present*

It would be gratifying to be able to say that student councils have also grown in maturity during the last 20 years; that they are now directly involved in the lives of most secondary school students. It would be satisfying to report that they have involved all kinds and types of students in their programs and have made a real impact on potential dropouts, the anti- and the un-social, the misfits, and the maladjusted. I'm afraid that this just isn't so. Too many councils still limit involvement to the good students, those who make high grades and never give anyone any trouble. Many are still concerned with trivia; many ignore those students who desperately need the help that a good council might give. Consider these questions:

- How many councils have attacked the problem of the dropout and have developed a constructive program to keep students in school?
- How many administrators consult the student council on matters of curriculum revision or school policy?
- How many councils have developed a realistic program to attract those who seldom participate in anything—the left-outs?
- What are councils doing about the increasing use of drugs by teenagers, juvenile delinquency, vandalism, and the current wave of protest?
- How many councils can say, truthfully, that they are the voice of the student body?

### *Council-Administrator Relations*

. . . For years, securing a really good student council adviser has been a pressing problem. In many cases, the adviser has been selected, willy-nilly, because he has some free time, is new in the school and has not yet "taken his turn," or because he once took part in some student council activity while in high school. Teacher training institutions must understand that they are doing little to train teachers to be student activities advisers. There should be more courses, both in regular sessions and in summer school. Peabody

College, Nashville, Tennessee, has made a good start by initiating a one-week course, with credit, for student council advisers. Let's hope that other colleges will take the hint.

If student councils are not yet all we think they should be, some of the blame must be shared by advisers, administrators, and student council associations, both state and national. I have been looking over some old convention programs, some 15 years old, and am chagrined to note how similar they all are! Problems we thought solved long ago are still being discussed in present day meetings. The argument is, of course, that problems do not change but students do! This may be true, but it seems that if student councils are going to be involved in the lives of present day students, they must discuss problems that are pertinent now, today, not 15 years ago. Convention programs, for example, must reflect the problems, the mores, the attitudes of present day high school students. We simply must understand that conditions *do* change and that we must change with them.

## *And What about the Future?*

What have we a right to expect of the student council in the future?

This much is certain: the student council in the next 20 years will have to identify with the new generation of students if it is to retain its present respected position. It must demonstrate that it is truly in touch with present day problems;that it knows, understands, and believes in teenagers. It will have to bestir itself and get excited about things that matter, about things a bit more significant than the theme of the next dance. If it fails, it will not retain the interest and the respect of tomorrow's students.

The student council still is, as it has been for more than 20 years, the most important student organization in the entire school. It has earned that reputation by hard work and a strong sense of duty. It has sponsored hundreds of significant projects and promoted all kinds of worthy programs. However, it cannot rest on its laurels. Now as never before students need to have *their* organization, that represents *them*, that speaks for *them*, that can initiate an action program of significant, important activities. My hope is that the student council will continue to provide service and leadership to the students and to the school.

# Brothers' Keepers?

FRED T. WILHELMS

OVER THE YEARS, this writer has been a member of a fair number of those teams that visit a secondary school when it is being evaluated for accreditation. In every case, one of the features examined was the student activities program, and we always asked about the pattern of student participation.

Almost always, when we first raised the question, we were given the impression that participation was very widespread and well balanced—that practically all the students took part and that the management was thoroughly democratic. It generally seemed that this was what the school really believed. But in most cases, when we pushed for hard data and interviewed various groups of students, a vastly different picture emerged. We found a few students heavily involved in several activities at a time, many more with a happy, moderate, balanced program; but all too often—varying from school to school—we found *something like half* the student body with almost no connection with activities at all. Many of them felt left out; some had a definite chip on their shoulder; there was usually a widespread belief among them that a small in-group "ran the show," grabbed all the offices, shut out the less prestigious groups. They felt that there was nothing for them, no chance to take a real part. And it was significant that the great majority of this unattached—often disaffected—group came from the lower social classes and from the minority groups. (It may be added that all dropout studies show that the dropouts felt nobody cared for them and were almost totally "out of things.")

Well, this is an old story to any experienced activities counselor. The fault isn't all on one side. The students who are accused of running the show are often simply those who are willing to do the work· the ones who are left out are often those whose social attitudes make them hard to reach.

And yet, this observer must confess he has rarely seen much real effort to reach out, to find the kinds of activities that would attract the unattached group. And, to be blunt about it, he has seen much more than he has wished to see of situations unquestionably loaded against the lower-class student.

All this has been brought into high relief by James S. Coleman's *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, the report of a massive study of the effects of school segregation. In that study, one finding stands out above all the others: *The thing that exercises the greatest positive force on the life and*

*Fred T. Wilhelms is a former Associate Secretary of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, Washington, D.C.*

*achievement of an underprivileged, lower-class (perhaps minority-group) student is the association with students of greater developed ability and higher aspirations.* The buildings and equipment and curriculum may be less than wonderful, but if he is actively associated with the better students, his whole pattern of achievement is likely to rise. If not, he is likely to sink.

Coleman and his associates wrote that conclusion in terms of classroom learning. But must it not be at least equally true of student activities? The leadership of the student council is generally the very cream of the crop. The students who are active in the various clubs and action programs are often the most buoyant, positive people in the school. Doesn't it stand to reason that a chance to work shoulder-to-shoulder with them would be a tremendous force in the lives of youngsters who have had too little chance? (Incidentally, the Coleman study also concluded that the higher-ability students are *not* pulled down by such contact.)

One almost has to read the report itself to get the full force of this finding. We may have suspected some such possibility before, but this is the first time that the case has been based on hard fact. In view of this impressive new evidence, I feel that those who lead school activities programs have nothing less than a *moral obligation* to make every effort to involve the less-privileged group. I know that in many cases they have already been trying—though generally, I suspect, something less than fanatically. I know the job will not be easy. But the solution of one of the greatest crises in our whole nation depends on our ability to turn what somebody has called "the society of losers" into a group of winners. I believe we have got to stretch every resource at our command to bring them into the normal pattern of life. I know of nothing that can help more than a positive program of school activities.

# Thoughts for a New Student Council President

JOHN O'BRIEN

Dear Mr. President:

You are beginning one of the most challenging and potentially rewarding jobs I know, and you have asked me for advice. This makes me feel good because it is nice to think of myself as someone who can solve other people's problems with no more energy than it takes to pound a typewriter. But I can't solve your problems because I'm not involved in your school

*John O'Brien, who graduated from LeMoyne College in Syracuse, N.Y., in June, 1968, was formerly president of the New York Association of Student Councils. During his college years, he was a staff member of many student council workshops. He has also been both a student delegate and a discussion group leader at the Williamsburg Student Burgesses.*

and I don't understand your situation as well as you should. I can't give you 10 easy steps to anywhere because we each walk different roads. What I can do for you is share my perspective on student council leadership with you. If you can come over and stand with me, maybe we will both see some things we haven't seen before and maybe even see some new aspects of some old problems. Let me tell you what I see.

First, your school, this year, right now is absolutely unique. It is composed of a mesh of intricate forces and relationships. It seems to me that your attempts to influence your school will be successful only to the extent that you succeed in understanding it and its uniqueness. This is another way of saying that you are not the same person as last year's council president; the people who elected you are not the same as the people who elected him; the school you preside over now is not the school that he led—teachers have come and gone, board of education policies may have changed, and your predecessor's attempts to make your school a better place have taken effect. Even more important, you are not now the person that you were last spring when you were elected: you have had a summer to think and plan and play and grow and you now face a whole new set of decisions about your future. And, of course, the people who elected you haven't stood still either. In view of all this, last year's solutions are a poor guide to handling this year's problems.

You must, however, keep in mind how difficult it is for us human beings to keep up with the present; we tend to stress those aspects of this moment's experience that make it like the last moment rather than those aspects of it that are new. If your leadership efforts are characterized by backward glances—call it "hardening of the categories"—you will probably find yourself arriving at unsatisfactory solutions to barely relevant problems. But if you can detect what is unique in your school scene, and then channel your council's energies towards meeting the unique problems, you will see, I think, your council expending a lot of energy and creativity on meaningful change.

I can feel your impatience to know how! The only way I know to find out what people want is to ask them and then to listen. And this is my second point: you will be successful as a leader to the extent that you first help people express what they think and want and then help them organize to get it done. Listening is so important and so little practiced that I am going to risk filling the air with more words about it. (I know it's strange to announce that I'm going to talk on and on about how important it is to *listen*, but bear with me.)

What does it mean to listen? For me, it means trying to share another person's world. Each of us has his own way of seeing the things that happen and, in that sense at least, each of us has his own world. But we are not trapped. We can learn ways to express to others what we think; and we all have the gift of imagination, which enables us to see another's world from his angle—if only partially and for a little while. As I see it, the whole of education exists to help people increase their sensitivity by sharpening their ability to listen and to express themselves. And listening has a healing quality. I have discovered many times that my problems lessen when someone else cares enough to just listen to me. Whether or not their advice is

practical, the compassion and love that they express by listening to me is priceless.

You and I are pretty lucky: we have been listened to; we are respected in our schools; we have pull; and we sit in positions of some authority. This raises a quest'on for me as a leader: How will I use my positon, to listen to other people or to inform them what they are to think and do? Will I work to share their worlds or will I impose my world on them? In other words, will I do for them what has been done for me?

And don't forget: listening, by expanding your world and giving you new information, will make you a more able problem-solver and leader. Not listening will keep you shut up inside yourself, away from the resources of others. How can I use the talents of others if I am not aware that they exist?

If listening works so well, how come it's so rare? Because it is so difficult. I'd like to explore with you some of the things that keep my ears closed to others; perhaps that will give us some clues about how to improve our listening powers.

Four factors prevent my becoming an effective listener: 1) I don't have the time and energy; 2) the organization I'm working with blocks, or at least doesn't help, my listening; 3) my negative attitude toward others; and 4) the way I see myself.

**I don't have the time and energy to listen.**

If I would realize that I am not indispensable to every activity around me, learn to delegate better, and not spread myself so thin, I would be less pressed by time and therefore better able to relax and listen to those about me. This is crucial, as listening is a relaxed kind of very hard work.

**The organization I'm working with blocks, or at least doesn't help, my listening.**

Sometimes the structure of the organization makes communication difficult. For example, some people don't have the skill to participate in a meeting governed by parliamentary procedure. Following *Robert's Rules* may put all the participative and decision-making power in the hands of those who understand—and can manipulate—the *Rules*. So, if you are going to use formal rules, make sure that all your members are knowledgeable about them.

Other people can't communicate because they can't relate to the organization. Most student councils claim to be representative; if you and I are going to make that claim, we had better look around and see if our organization spends enough time listening and has enough listening posts so that everyone can express himself if he wants to. Many councils spend all their time trying to think of better ways to talk *to* people—newsletters, posters, PA announcements, and so on—and no time trying to think of better ways for people *to talk to them*. A suggestion box is a start but it's pretty impersonal and a long way from our goal: a council that can really say it knows what the students, *all the students*, think and want.

Perhaps you might want to experiment with an approach that is gaining popularity on college campuses around the country: interviewing, which is merely organized listening. How would this work? Briefly, it would involve

gathering your council together to decide what you want to ask the people you represent. I recommend that the questions be kept pretty general so that people can really express themselves. (I have in mind questions like "What do you want from our school?" "What problems are you having with getting what you want?" "How could the student council be of help to you?") Each interviewer, however, has to follow through until he thinks he truly understands the person he is interviewing.

Once you have a tentative list of questions, the people who are going to do the interviewing should pair up and try them out on one another. Then the questions can be revised as some of the problems of interviewing become clear.

One question every interviewer should be ready to answer is "What do you want to know for?" Your group ought to discuss what use will be made of the information.

"But what happens to our projects while everyone is out interviewing and listening to other people? We were elected to get things done, not to spend all our time listening." That's a good question; I can't pretend to know the final answer. But I believe that, if your student council is so busy with its commitments to last year's projects, or to its private ideas, that it can't listen and use the information it hears to keep the program up-to-the-minute, then perhaps it should evaluate these commitments. Also, if the council members' time is taken by existing projects that are meeting students' needs, you might consider involving more non-council members in committee work—especially to carry out the traditional projects—and leave your representatives more time to represent.

**My negative attitude toward others.**

Your attitude towards others will determine whether you consider listening to them a waste of time or time well spent. Let's examine two attitudes. With the first, I assume that "most people" are apathetic and don't really care about the school; if I took the time to be interested in what they have to say they would only laugh and put me down, because they don't care and I do. If I see people that way, the chances are that I will communicate with them only to the extent of *informing* them about council activities; I may even ask them to work on one of *my* projects, and, when they show no signs of life, I will complain about their apathy to my friends who *really* care about things.

Now let's look at the situation from a different perspective: let's assume that "most people" really do care about their education but that many of them have been unable to find ways of expressing their concern. To them it doesn't seem as if anyone wants to listen to them: "Nobody really cares about me except my friends." In other words, they believe the same thing about you that you believe about them. Neither has evidence of the other's concern, though it is there. This assumption does not lead us to a dead end, as our first assumption did. This one leads us to seek means of bridging the gap between "us" and "them"; we refuse to divide our world into the good and the bad, the concerned and the unconcerned, the smart and the stupid.

I want to discuss one other harmful way of approaching people. If I see other people primarily as means to do what I want done, it is going to be very difficult for me to listen to anything from them except "Yes, sir!" If I believe that people elected me to tell them what to do, I will be more than a little baffled when they begin to resent it. But if, on the other hand, I tend to see other people as worthwhile in themselves, if I believe that each person has some contribution to make, if, in short, I believe that I am not the only one with a unique world, then it becomes important for me to share his world with him. My job as leader is not to get him to do what I want, but to help him do what he wants.

**The way I see myself.**

Just as my assumptions about other people can either help or hinder my listening, so the way I see myself is important. The first person I must listen to is me. That may sound very simple, but try it, right now. Think carefully about what you want from your year as council president, what you want to learn and do. If you are like me you will find these difficult questions, whose answers will be discovered in the process of interacting with other people.

Also, you must think out your ideas so as to be more confident of them. This confidence is of paramount importance, as you have to believe in yourself before you can be open to others. I find that to the extent that I see myself as worthwhile I can listen; when I am pressured or scared or feel unable to cope with the situation, I am a bad listener.

One final observation: your leadership will be successful if you view your efforts as problem solving. To be a successful problem-solver you must assume that 1) though there may be no *final* answer, especially to a human problem, *some* answer is possible; 2) each person involved in the problem is a resource for its solution; 3) if I am involved in the problem, perhaps I am myself part of the problem as well as part of the answer; and 4) people have a right to participate in planning their own future.

I wish I could talk to you right now to find out whether my message has come through. If I have been at all successful, you may have a little different perspective on the job that lies ahead. If I can be of any help at all, please let me know.

I wish you courage and joy in your year's work.

# An Open Letter to a High School Student

ALLAN A. GLATTHORN

Dear Sally:

I guess the last thing you want to read is a letter from a middle-aged principal about "youth today." There has been too much verbal pollution on that topic already. But I have always felt free to write to you about the things on my mind, even when I knew they might bore you. And I'm making this an open letter, in the hope that principals, parents, teachers, and other students will read it. I'm deeply concerned that too many people are planning the "schools of the future" without really listening to or trying to understand the students of today. And maybe in this way a few will begin to listen.

The other problem with the subject of this letter, besides the fact that it's thoroughly boring to all of us by this time, is that it really doesn't make too much sense to speak in general terms about the millions of unique individuals called "youth." You, for example, are a very special person who can't be easily labeled or categorized. And, of course, there are significant differences even between large groups of students: Milwaukee is not Abington, black is not white, city is not suburb, town is not country, working class is not upper class, South is not North, boy is not girl, and so on. But despite the fact that there are important individual and group differences, maybe we can talk about some general trends emerging among many young people, since the question is so important.

And what I would like to do is to ask you some questions that you can answer for yourself by looking around you, by talking with your friends—and by looking deep inside yourself.

How many of your friends are scared? Scared of the future, scared of the war, scared of each other? The fear lies deep inside where it can't be seen, but it's there, and it expresses itself in obvious ways like mental illness and suicide and in less obvious ways like staying away from school and sitting in classes with your mind far away, pulling at your lip and fiddling with your hair. And the reasons for the terror are real enough. We live in a crazy world and the man who is not scared is either a fool or a saint.

How many of your friends are bored? Not just bored with school, but bored with all of life—bored with television, bored with sports, bored with each other? Psychologists argue that your generation has had so much stimulation in your lives that you have reached a point where nothing really grabs you for long. And I think that much of the behavior that adults worry about so much—drug use, riots and demonstrations, experimentation with sex—is really a desperate flight from boredom.

How much passivity do you see around you? Passivity is sitting back and letting things happen to you. Passivity is watching television and listening to rock music and standing on street corners and daydreaming in classrooms and lying on your bed watching the funny lights go round and

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round. Why so much passivity? I think television is one of the major causes. The Professional-Worriers-About-the-Younger-Generation figure that you have been massaged by 15,000 hours of game shows and soap operas and Dark Shadows and Johnny Carsons—and all of that sitting back and watching the flickering shadows has taken its toll. I also have a hunch that some of the passivity comes from a feeling of powerlessness. If you think you can make a difference in your own life and the lives of others, you turn to action. If you feel that you are caught up in forces you can't control, you sit back and let them have their way with you.

How many of your friends have forgotten how to feel? That may seem like a crazy question to ask, since adults usually see the young person today as an overemotional protester. But I see mostly "coolness" in the young—a coolness that means never showing enthusiasm and being unable to cry and finding it hard to experience real joy. I think the coolness masks a lot of inner turmoil, and I think that your friends desperately wish they could feel something. But there is no anger, only sullenness; no joy, only pleasure; no laughter, only a cynical smile.

How many of your friends don't give a damn about tomorrow or yesterday but live only for today? If you aren't sure tomorrow will come or if you maybe are afraid that it *will* come and bring only problems, and if the past seems so unlike the days that you know—then maybe the only sane thing to do is to hang on to the present. Well, that's debatable, I guess, but I think there are a lot of young people who simply are living one day at a time. As you can guess, that attitude raises all kinds of problems for a school whose curriculum is based on the past and whose threat-and-reward system is often keyed to the future.

How many of your friends are sure that no one else has any answers for them? "No one else" means church, school, parents, Vice-President Agnew, Billy Graham, Mao Tse Tung, and Allan Glatthorn. (What an illustrious group!) That doesn't mean that every teen-ager is out in the streets rebelling against authority. It means instead that even those who seem to obey the rules and follow the advice of adult society are playing a game of obedience. Deep inside they really don't believe that anybody has the right to give them orders, make decisions for them, pass judgment on them in any way, or tell them what is right and wrong. In the eyes of your friends, those are personal and individual matters to be resolved by looking inside yourself, not by listening to some adult.

How many of your friends feel that they have lost control over their own lives? Have you noticed how much of the rhetoric of militant blacks and young radicals is concerned with POWER—black power, power to the people, student power? I think that's because most of us feel impotent. We feel we're part of a mammoth society of big government, big labor with big government, big unions, big industries, and big organizations treating us like anonymous objects. I think everybody feels this way deep in his guts—but the blacks and the young especially feel that they have lost control over the events of their lives. They don't influence events—things happen to them instead.

How many of your friends have stopped caring about job or career—except as a means to an end? One of our adult hang-ups is that the job is significant unto itself, and men, especially in our culture, have defined themselves in terms of the job. ("Who are you?" "Oh, I'm a principal.")

I sense a profound change here in young people. They do not want to commit themselves to a job. They don't want to sell their soul to the company. They do not want to make long-range plans about some career future. But the seventh-grade counselor goes on asking anxiously, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" (Incidentally, that's a question I haven't answered for myself yet. Do you have any suggestions?)

Along with that shift in attitude towards jobs, I sense a greater concern among the young for the beautiful experience. And that's not the old adult notion of "having a good time." I think the popularity of rock festivals is an indication that the most sensitive young want to encounter love and openness and excitement and beauty—all at once. I worry, in fact, that the summer festivals of 1970 turned out badly—some because of adults who for legitimate and illegitimate reasons were afraid of them and some because of the bad vibrations among the young. I worry, I guess, because the "Woodstock spirit" died so quickly—and I don't know what comes next.

And don't you sense in yourself and among your friends a dramatic change in attitude towards private property? I see teen-agers spending a lot of time window-shopping and buying things—but I see them caring less about keeping and preserving things and about distinguishing between "mine" and "yours." We adults are strange in this way. We seem to think it is all right if you despoil nature—but you must take good care of things. (And we think taking someone else's property is one of the greatest sins—unless it's the property of a Vietnamese peasant.) The young are saying, I think, that it's a sin to despoil nature—but you can destroy things any time you want to. And it doesn't really matter who seems to be the owner, because we all should share what we have.

Well, Sally, do you see those changes as I do? I remember your letters to me, and I know that you personally have become aware of many of those feelings in yourself. (And strangely enough, I sense some of them happening within me. But that's another story—for a less public letter. For the time being, let's keep the spotlight on the young, not the middle-aged establishment.) If these changes are taking place, what do they suggest for our schools?

It means, first of all, that the adults in the schools should spend a great deal of time and effort in trying to understand what is happening with young people today. Understanding, of course, is a two-way street, and I think all of us—young and old, black and white, radical and reactionary—need to try to stand in each other's shoes. At a practical level this probably means that we should regularly schedule in our schools no-holds-barred discussions involving young people, teachers, parents, and administrators as equals.

Once we have achieved some measure of understanding, perhaps then we can talk more sensibly about changes in the school. What kinds of changes are needed for a new generation? I don't have a pat solution to that problem, but I do have some ideas that maybe we can talk about later. And I guess it's more important for you and the principal and teachers in your school to find your own answers, rather than getting the "Glatthorn Plan" all neatly tied with a blue ribbon.

Give my love to your parakeet. Hang in there—and say a prayer for the salvation of you and me and the egret and all the living things of this world. Peace,

Allan

# A Report from California: Student Revolt and the Student Council

JOSEPH N. DRURY

"How are we going to decorate the gym for the dance?" "Should our cheerleaders be chosen or elected?" "How can we keep our campus litter-free?" "How short may skirts, how long may hair, be worn on campus?"

Such earthshaking decisions have been the primary and perhaps the sole concern of many student councils in California and across the nation in recent years. But "surface" decisions and trivial projects are rapidly becoming as obsolescent as the "collegiate" films of the twenties.

The appropriate concerns of the contemporary student council are far different. They are deeply serious, long-range in effect: How relevant is our education? Is the emphasis on grades or on learning? What can be done about dropouts? Is democracy being practiced as well as preached? What about drugs on campus? Are campus disorders spontaneous and constructive attempts at reform, or are they blueprinted by architects of chaos?

Finally, are students—and the student council in particular—really participating in school administration? The council's answer to this question can render it as obsolete as the ox-cart or as modern as a guided tour of the moon, for the student revolution has touched or will affect in some way every high school campus, not only in California, but in the nation.

Many principals and schools now priding themselves on being "in perfect control of the situation" will find themselves helpless in the face of sudden crises: confrontations, demands, threats, walkouts, sit-downs, trash can fires, fire-bombing. Educators have learned the bitter truth—a relatively few well-organized individuals can disrupt even a university campus.

Critical questions loom: What has caused the student revolution that challenges the relevance of the too-familiar, socially-static student council? And what impels students to disrupt their schools?

Many factors, external and internal, could be cited. Globally, nations bristle with world-destroying weapons, threatening the continuance of our species. Globally, the electronic and atomic-age generation—better informed than any in all history—are understandably alarmed, watching world leaders repeating catastrophic blunders, seemingly playing Russian roulette with eternity.

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Nationally, many draft-eligibles balk at participaion in an unpopular, undeclared war that drains billions from a concentrated attack on poverty and from efforts to improve schools and educational methods. Ethnic and economic checkerboarding in urban areas, with television hourly flood-lighting the contrasting affluence of suburbia, builds ugly moods in favor of quick and violent readjustment.

Nationally, too, young adults are pulling the ring on the grenade fashioned and hefted by their parents who by the scores of thousands attacked the public education system in the post-Sputnik decade. Ironically, many adults who today most strongly condemn the ideas and actions of student activists are the very individuals who themselves led the furious attack on public education a decade ago.

All these issues are being brought to a head as youth moves toward numerical dominance in our nation. Desperate, frantic for urgent action, a body of disillusioned young adults—many idealistic and intelligent—are striking at the nearest target: an educational system they consider irrelevant and moribund, and which they see as a hopelessly obsolescent instrument to cope with the pace of change in their half-century.

That they cannot answer the question "What next?" or explain the obvious paradox in seeking to rescue civilization by rushing, torch in hand, to reduce the ashes the institutions that educated them to their danger fails to deter them.

Inasmuch as the anarchistic or subversive groups would leave our schools as charred wasteland, where do we look for answers?

The greatest hope for peaceful change is the so-called silent—or, to be fair, the ignored, unpublicized, and to date largely unorganized—majority of moderates who sincerely desire reform rather than obliteration of our schools. Their attitude was best expressed by a member of the California Student Advisory Board in a passionate statement before the State Board of Education last March: "We don't want to *destroy* the Establishment, we want to *become part* of the Establishment." The almost untapped potential of this group provides the strongest possible reason for granting power to elected student officers, since normally these are drawn from moderate ranks. Extremists—especially violent extremists—though receiving the lion's share of attention, generally are unable to marshal a voting or acting majority in a school. In most California high schools where trouble has occurred, at most 200 or 300 out of 3000 are involved in "blowouts," "burnouts," and other rebellious activities.

Yet why have many extremists been successful? One answer surely lies in the school's antiquated pyramidal authority structure. As California has amply demonstrated, any school so governed is inherently vulnerable, as it sows the seeds of its own destruction by extolling the merits of a democracy it rarely practices. Students are taught *about* democracy; few have opportunities to *participate* in its most vital functions, policy determination and decision making. The oft-repeated phrase, "They are only children; why should they have a voice?" stretches the generation gap into an unbridgeable chasm. One understanding California State Board member expressed it this way: "Our laws are out of date. Our youth are no longer children at 16 and 17."

The attitude of most school authorities, in failing to understand the trend, has created a student power vacuum increasingly apparent to youth on both high school and college campuses. As might be expected, individual self-styled spokesmen, as well as members of well-organized activist groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society and the Black Student Union, are gleefully leaping into this vacuum at Berkeley, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego. Flaunting their often purposely impossible demands, usually with prearranged television and news coverage, they attack the so-called Establishment, gaining through sensationalized publicity an audience far outweighing their numbers and importance. Their aggressiveness and success have attracted some followers; others have been drawn by the large measure of truth in their allegations that student participation is a myth.

Can the traditional "puppet" council meet the challenge of these activists? It has not done so in California. The infectious excitement and the dramatic process of confrontation have an overwhelming appeal to many jaded young adults. To match the appeal of the militants, the schools must replace inert "shadow councils" with student groups operating as actual participating democracies. Though we are well aware that "outside" agitators and organizers are largely responsible for triggering trouble in our schools, California's experience indicates that schools with strong student councils will suffer less from unrest and violence, since the militants attack weakness.

The attitude of the principal toward student participation in general and the council in particular, then, is vital in suppressing violence. California's experience has shown that the administrator who bypasses the council, deals separately with student militants or "wildcat" delegations, and (more seriously) agrees to the activists' demands is courting disaster. His actions say one or all of the following:

(a) The student council, as constituted in that school, is not democratic. He must therefore consult with the "outside" group to provide a fair hearing, *or*
(b) He lacks confidence in the ability of the student officers to cope with a difficult situation, *or*
(c) He fears the possible consequences of the militants' actions to the school, the council members, or to himself and his career.

For any of these reasons, he prefers to keep the reins in his own hands. Yet, in so doing, he has destroyed the democratic elective process in his school. Furthermore, in "negotiating" with a militant group, affairs are no longer, as he imagines, under his control. Once successful with ramrod tactics, why should any extremist thereafter follow constitutional channels? The administrator has thus at the outset irreparably weakened or destroyed his—and the school's—most potent resource for peaceful and constructive solutions to campus problems: the functioning and broadly representative student council.

How can a school determine the effectiveness of its council to meet or forestall contemporary revolt? Here are recent guidelines* derived from

* Adapted from *Recommended Structure of Student Councils,* developed by Genevieve McDermott, CASC's contact representative with California Association of Secondary School Administrators, and by California state advisers at Carlton High School, March, 1969.

many pooled years of experience statewide in California. The modern student council:

- *develops a program of responsible student participation in school administration.*
- *reduces or eliminates requirements to run for office.*
- *eliminates academic requirements.*
- *provides that membership be no smaller than 20 nor larger than 25-30.*
- *provides for election "at large" of at least 50 percent of membership.*
- *provides a daily meeting at a regular time.*
- *ensures that student council has an advisory group formed of representatives elected from class groups of 30-40 members, the purpose being to secure expressions of reaction and opinion from students.*
- *provides for appointment by the student council executive committee of a number of students as voting council members to ensure representation of all students.*
- *provides that the student body constitution delegates to students all that authority for which students can be held responsible.*
- *provides that student opinion be requested in other policy and procedural matters that affect them.*
- *arranges for representation of students as a tripartite member on a faculty-community-school advisory committee.*
- *ensures that the student council adviser be granted released time and added increment for his extra duties.*

To summarize, the effective student council must have built-in safeguards against becoming an academic or social club. It must not be an administrative echo chamber. Encompassing the full range of student opinion, it must expose and solve problems at the student level, and early, before they become crises that reach the principal.

First of all, there must be statewide coordination of adult and student leadership to provide intelligent and consistent response to student unrest. In California this spring, a dramatic communications breakthrough occurred. It culminated in the most important series of student-adult top level meetings devoted to improving secondary education ever to take place in California. The State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Max Rafferty, his staff, and seven of the ten members of the State Board convened with the 25-member State Cabinet of the California Association of Student Councils for three hours to discuss methods of reducing violence on the high school campus.

During the same three-day period, 70 members of the 1969 California Student Advisory Board, chosen statewide, met with the full State Board of Education in San Francisco to present their more general recommendations for the improvement of education.

Preliminary action by the California State Board of Education included unanimous passage of the following:

Decision: *That the State Board recommend to all school district boards of education in California that student advisory boards be established in each secondary school district and in each school.*

Results: Dozens of California school districts—including Los Angeles City

—are now meeting with student advisory boards. Individual schools have developed similar boards.

Decision: *Each month the State Board of Education will study a different proposal of the California Student Advisory Board.*

Results: Student proposals are now being methodically studied by the State Board.

Decision: *Closer communications will be established between the State Department of Education and CASC.*

Results: Beginning with the September meeting, a student selected by CASC will each year attend the monthly two-day State Board meetings as a regular participating, but non-voting, member of the California State Board of Education.

Interpretation: These actions represent a milestone. For the first time at top decision-making levels in the state of California, students have access to channels for communicating student problems, proposals, and recommendations. The moves demonstrate a keen desire on the part of the highest officials in the state to head off revolt by effecting reform "within the Establishment."

There is reason to believe that similar representation may later be granted on such bodies as the State Curriculum Commission, the Vocational Education Committee of the State Board, and other agencies involved with student concerns, such as narcotics control.

Below the state level, in several large urban districts, channels are opening for protests, grievances, and proposals for reform through methods other than those furnished by the more permanent formal student advisory boards.

At the district level, for instance, the San Diego city schools have an interesting democratic technique—the Insight-Action Seminar sequence. Modifications of this plan could be used by districts or by individual schools anywhere to enable the student voice to be fairly heard. Recent topics for discussion included the drug problem, effectiveness of the district student council association, effectiveness of counseling, night football problems, black studies, and human relations workshops.

The following illustrate the operation of the system:

INSIGHT-ACTION SEMINARS

Step 1—*Insight Seminars*

a) Problem approved by a principal for discussion in an insight seminar at monthly student association meetings.
b) Student representatives discuss problem with expert(s) to determine the facts (an administrator sits in on the discussion as an observer).
c) Seminar group votes to determine whether or not to send problem to action seminar.

Step 2—*Action Seminar*

a) At the next monthly meeting (two-week mandatory delay to prevent hasty action), the topic is transferred to a small group seminar for possible action.
b) If action is recommended, the proposal is carried to the general student session for final vote.

c) Recommended action is then forwarded to principals, with reasons for request.

Step 3—*Principals*

a) Principals discuss *pros* and *cons* of action recommended by students.
b) Principals may approve or reject students' action, giving reasons.

Step 4—*Board of Education*

a) Normally students accept the principals' decision.
b) In unusual instances, however, students may strongly desire a review of the principal's decision. Their proposal may then be submitted to the board.

At the individual school level, El Capitan High School in Lakeside, San Diego County, has developed an exciting experimental program in student participation that intelligently forestalls student unrest.

Principal Russell H. Savage, interestingly, reverses the cutomary practice that school regulations are made for the 20 percent who break them. Instead, he designs them for the 80 percent who are responsible. He puts great trust, then, in the maturity of the students. The flexible schedule enables every student to participate in the student council, which is actually a body similar to the New England town meetings—but its function is only advisory. This provides a very necessary open forum for opinions and suggestions. This same concept, incidentally, is regularized in many parts of the state, with open noon or after-school meetings held in high schools in Sonora, San Jose, Bakersfield, and Orange County, and in many other areas and districts.

The actual decision- and policy-making body at El Capitan, however, is called the Executive Council. It is composed of the five top elected students, the principal, leadership adviser, a counselor, and two teachers selected by the students. The group sets policy for all student affairs, and this includes curriculum matters.

A means of reinforcing the council by providing an adequate voice for minority groups is used by Lincoln High School in Los Angeles. "Associate members" are added to their group. Other schools use "members-at-large" for the same purpose. In the north, at Lassen High School, Principal Knute Clark strongly recommends that students be consulted concerning all school affairs affecting them, including curriculum. "The elimination of student unrest," he states, "lies with constructive approaches to involve students with school people to solve mutual problems."

In all of this, the key word is involvement, and, by involving students sincerely interested in reform, even hostile students often become interested in seeing positive results.

Suppose an administrator, despite all efforts, finds himself a target for "inside" or "outside" agitators with their own timetable and manufactured incidents?

First of all, such revolts must be met by a "Hayakawan" firmness. But preparations can be made. All schools, in fact, should in these troubled days anticipate such an emergency:

1. A bulletin should be readied, listing likely occurrences, and providing appropriate steps scaled to the seriousness of the occurrence.

2. Specific responsibilities should be clearly assigned to staff members, with bell signals or other coded means designating stages of emergency.
3. Plans should include alerting the central office to emerging incidents.
4. The culminating action would call in the police. At this point, the police officers take over.

Then the long process of rebuilding morale and public confidence begins. For any principal who has been through such an ordeal, the support of student leaders, faculty, and parents, derived through shared responsibility and a democratic team approach, provides a welcome source of strength.

# Will Student Councils Die?

KENT M. KEITH

MEETING with student council officers in several parts of the country last spring served to further one of my deepest fears: that student councils will die, victims of their own triviality.

Student councils have certainly *not* taken a turn for the worse. The problem is that recently they have taken no turns at all. The school environment is changing rapidly, but few student councils have changed their programs accordingly. Yesterday's good program looks trite in the face of the turbulence and soul-searching in today's high schools. Student councils have always been in danger of being trivial, but when that trivia isn't even in the right ball park, student councils will surely strike out.

In other times, no doubt, councils seemed both trivial and irrelevant, and yet survived. Why pessimism now? Because students across the country have made it clear in the last year that they do not intend to wait upon formalities. If student councils don't work, if they don't deal with the authentic issues, they will be ignored or boycotted by the very students they are supposed to serve.

Most alarming, if the theory of students working with teachers and administrators doesn't work, some students will try working *against* teachers and administrators.

The irrelevant student council, then, will be the dead student council. Those who believe in the concept of student councils can ensure their continued survival only by making councils as relevant as possible to as many students as possible.

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*Kent Keith graduated from Harvard College in June, 1970. He has been involved in student council work for many years, has been on the staffs of several leadership workshops, and has spoken at many state and regional council conferences. He is the author of the* The Silent Revolution, *a booklet in NASC's New Directions for Student Councils series.*

## *The "Anything-and-Everything" Council*

First, we must cut away all the deadwood that clutters most student council programs. We have built up hopelessly confused "anything-and-everything" councils which do too many things, but very few of them well.

This situation occurs most often when council members fail to understand the unique potential of the student council. When this happens, council members naturally substitute their own interests for those of the council itself. This produces confusion and overload.

Consider the state conventions, and the panoply of topics presented to interested student leaders. How about the voting age? Vietnam? Fluoridation? Our relations with South America? Beautification? The list is endless. Conspicuous, however, is a definite avoidance of discussions on school problems. At one convention, for example, a discussion group on the student council *in the school* was only one of 10 groups—and even *this* group switched to a discussion of community projects after the first 20 minutes.

This overload of interests on the part of student council members points up a crucial question: should council members look out toward society, or inward, into their schools? It is my contention that they must look back into their schools, or cease to exist as meaningful organizations.

Young leaders should by all means be encouraged to think about national and international issues. But these interests can be better developed by other organizations. What we must ask ourselves is: What is the student council *specially* qualified to do? What can it clearly do *better* than other organizations? If the answer is "nothing," then student councils deserve to be disbanded. If, on the other hand, there is a special niche it can fill better than any other group, then that niche—and that niche alone—ought to be the focus of the student council's activities.

My own belief is that student councils enjoy a special—and enviable—place in school affairs. As a body representing student interests, it can present the student case for change and can help create the school situation that students want. At the same time, as a body recognized by the administration and faculty, it is placed in a pivotal position through which it can interpret administration attitudes to the student body and coordinate student and faculty efforts for school reform.

With this special position in the school, on what should a council focus? I believe that it ought to declare that its main business is education. Student councils should work to provide an atmosphere for learning in which as many students as possible can learn as much as possible. The successful student council encourages learning, promotes morale, initiates and moderates change in the educational process. It works to bring students, teachers, and administrators closer together to form a constructive school community. This is done primarily through the activities program, which the student council presides over, constantly striving to make it as meaningful as possible for the *entire* student body.

Student councils must remember that they can promote many student interests without pursuing all those interests themselves. Councils ought to let the service clubs do the fund-raising or community projects; let the political science club do the lobbying on the voting age; let the civics class debate the war in Viet Nam. Those are areas in which clubs and classes have

special strength. The special strength of the council, on the other hand, is to discover new interests, set up programs to serve them, and win faculty and student support for them. After this has been done, the council should turn over the program's administration to other students. This maximizes both student council strength and student participation. Student councils were not meant to be all things to all people; rather, they were meant to help all people be all the things they would like to be.

### *The Silent Majority*

If the central task of the student council is to help create an atmosphere in which as many students as possible can learn as much as possible, then its prime goal must be to help each student benefit from his school experience.

It is here that student councils discover a very uncomfortable fact: the majority of their student body is not being reached by the educational process. We call this unreached group the "Silent Majority."

The members of this Silent Majority come to school in the morning—late—arriving just before the last bell. They wander through the school day, wondering why the teachers are saying what they are, or, more relevantly, wondering what interesting things may happen after school. The classroom is hot; other people always do the talking; the chairs are uncomfortable; the teacher is boring. Many of them make good grades—but they don't know why: it's just something you're supposed to do. Others do not make good grades: they were convinced long ago that they have no talent and they no longer try. The Silent Majority knows one should go to school—but only as a duty. That's all. The bell rings and the day's duty is done. Off to better things.

Surveys and studies indicate that students drop out of school because there is nothing *in* school that interests them. One study found that two-thirds of the dropouts in question were not involved in any school activities. This finding emphasizes the need for reaching the Silent Majority. It is not only a matter of enriching an individual student's education experience, but also a question of whether that experience will continue at all.

It is my belief that reaching the Silent Majority is the most important thing that any student council could do in any given year under almost any circumstances.

How do you reach the unreached? First, by letting the Silent Majority into the mainstream of school life. Most councils, for example, don't represent more than 20 percent of the student body. Educators have been talking for years about the need for more representative councils, and it is time someone listened to them. Should we really be surprised when unrepresented students set up an underground press or stage protest demonstrations? Students want to be heard, and they want action. The student council could be an outlet for their energy, rather than a roadblock. Personally, I feel there should be no grade-point requirements or teacher approvals necessary for a student to run for student council office. The student should only have to be a full-time registered student of the school. *Period.*

Second, council members must get out into the school. Reaching students is not a matter of putting up posters, giving speeches, or having

open house days. The Silent Majority is not a group that responds to one-way communications. They must be reached on a person-to-person basis.

This means that student council members should try to get to know five or six members of the Silent Majority each year. We call this the "each one help one" system. It is a slow process, involving casual meetings and the buildup of rapport between two people with different attitudes. The student council member communicates through his own sincerity. As a friendship is established, the council member may learn what members of the Silent Majority really consider pertinent, and thus what the council can do to help out. Also, he may be able to bring the Silent Majority member into school activities.

By letting the Silent Majority in and getting the student council out "into the field," the council becomes more representative, more relevant, and more effective. It is my belief that councils that fail to reach the Silent Majority will cease to exist within the next five years.

### *Time to Move*

The performance of student councils now has wide social significance. Student councils represent the idea that students, teachers, and administrators can work together to build a flourishing school community. When student councils are trivial and irrelevant, they make a mockery of the concept of "working through the system" to bring about change. The student council that is a laughingstock causes other students to reject the idea that it makes sense to work with teachers and administrators. To them, it looks like a petty game for sissies, and they want no part of it.

The unrest in our schools should be commanding our attention. Students are dissatisfied. They are watching—and waiting. They are making up their mind about "the Establishment" and how to work with it—or fight it.

In this atmosphere, it is time for student councils to move. It is time for student councils to provide an effective and meaningful alternative to riots and protest demonstrations.

This will not be done by standing on tradition. It is not enough for student councils to put up posters, hold dances and banquets, go to conventions, and meditate on the dress code. Student councils are at last on the firing line, and right now they are sitting ducks. If student councils do not look into their own schools, if they do not become more representative, if they do not reach out to the students who are now unreached, then they will be swept away by the student revolution.

Will student councils die? Not necessarily: If they learn to speak to and for the student community, they will live. And I, for one, would like to see them live.

# Obituary for a Student Council

RAYMOND PAUL

News was received today of the death of yet another student council in the United States. Following a long illness, the council was pronounced dead by its members during its regularly scheduled meeting this morning.

Born in 1957 when the new high school was opened, the council's childhood was marked by honors from the state and national student council organizations for student participation and outstanding success in arousing school spirit.

However, in recent years, the council failed in its attempt to obtain the support of the student body and to increase the faltering school spirit.

When contacted about the local council's demise, spokesmen for the state and national associations stated that they were not aware of the tragedy, as the council had not renewed its membership last year. "We're so understaffed that we can barely keep in touch with those schools which are members. We believe our attention must go to our dues-paying members."

The school principal reported that death was imminent last year when less than 50 percent of the student body voted for its council officers. When asked why his school's council was not involved with curriculum revision and racial problems as is the council at the town's other high school, he stated, "There are certain areas which are exclusively administrative responsibilities and where students must have no voice. Students must not usurp administrative powers."

"I, too, knew it was coming, but I just didn't have time to work to save it." That was the comment of the council's faculty adviser, a social studies teacher at the high school. "I have to teach five classes a day, carry a part-time job, get my master's degree, and still have some time to spend with my wife and kids. We tried to get pay for my student council work so that I could drop my part-time job at the shoe store and devote the time to council, but the board of education turned us down year after year. I'm sorry council died, but, quite frankly, I feel a burden of frustration has been removed."

The president of the now defunct council attributed its death to the fact that the school's population had changed over recent years. "No longer is the student body one type of kid—there are so many splinter groups that did not support our programs that we were wasting our time. The students were just not interested in our activities."

There will be no calling hours.
Services will not be held.
No flowers, please.

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*Raymond Paul is student council adviser, Bristol (Conn.) Eastern High School, and former executive secretary of the Connecticut Federation of Student Councils. He was also a member of the 1970-71 NASC Advisory Committee.*

# Programs for Protesters

SCOTT THOMSON

THE HEAT and clamor of the student protest movement is striking the School Establishment across the country. Popular magazines and television stations vividly report the action. Much attention is given to its possible causes, with trained sociologists and second-guessers alike listing a multitude of reasons for this phenomenon. But is all this disruption inevitable? Is the stridency necessary?

Perhaps not. The purpose of this article is to specify programs that may attract the activist student and afford him opportunities to release his energy into constructive rather than obstructive channels.

The central point is that the old ways are not good enough. Just talking and listening will not do the job: today's student wants action. Traditional extracurricular programs will not suffice: Today's student wants social involvement. Benevolence will fall short: Today's student wants a piece of the power.

But in designing programs to satisfy these student demands, school administrators must keep in mind certain important questions, such as: How far can the school go towards involving its students without abdicating its responsibilities? At what point does student participation become excessive, disruptive, and therefore impermissible? Here are eight suggestions of how the school might take the initiative in involving students in constructive ways.

1. Student protesters invariably assert that the curriculum is irrelevant, that subjects have no meaning. To meet this criticism, why not schedule special days with student-planned curriculum? Let your student council take charge for a two- or three-hour period once a month. Have them set up a curriculum committee, composed in part of adult advisers, to scan proposed courses. Establish a student administrative committee to schedule classes.

The curriculum committee might print application forms so that any student or faculty member may propose a course relatively easily. Offerings might include symposia on drugs or alcoholism, seminars on the stock market, guest speakers on the biological revolution, scuba diving in the

*Scott Thomson, who is superintendent of Evanston (Ill.) Township HS, was a major speaker at the NASC-sponsored meeting of executive secretaries of student council state associations held in January, 1969, in New Orleans. This article is a summary of the concluding section of his speech.*

swimming pool, a discussion of UFO's, or poetry reading. The only limit to the curriculum is the creativity of the students.

Only a few restrictions need be imposed: (1) Faculty members should be present at the classes. (2) No denominational religious or other prohibited instruction ought to be offered. (3) Commercial entertainment, such as popular films, ought to be restricted. (4) No four-letter words or similar examples of bad taste should be allowed.

Cubberly HS in Palo Alto, California, offered such a program in the spring of 1967 and again in 1968. The first year's program is fully described in the December, 1967, issue of the NASSP *Bulletin* in an article entitled "Idea Forum." The regular school day was telescoped into 30-minute periods and the balance of time was devoted to the Idea Forum. Other schools have sponsored similar programs and called them "Educational Fairs."

This approach not only gives students an opportunity to present classes but also provides the sobering experience of managing a program and of *producing* relevancy rather than just grandly talking about it.

2. Students want involvement with community needs. What better way is there to accomplish this than by volunteer work? Most schools leave this to happenstance but wiser schools plan for it. The New Trier High Schools in suburban Chicago employ a full-time coordinator of volunteer bureaus. Any student who wants to get involved with worthwhile community work can attach himself at school to one of over 30 volunteer working groups, all of which include other students. The range of opportunity includes tutoring, inner city project work, hospital work, recreation assistance, helping the handicapped and aged, and performing special work as the need arises. No student at New Trier need feel uninvolved or unwanted.

3. The more politically-minded activists will want to "do their thing" against the Establishment. Mostly they will want to speak out to an audience about the Establishment's alleged "hypocrisy" and "inhumanity." To accommodate this drive, provide an open microphone (restricted to students and teachers) once a week, at which time students are allowed to speak out on issues they think are important. Experience shows that the more angry student dominates the microphone at first, but that by the third or fourth session the silent majority begins to step forward and assert itself. The significance of this fact alone is well worth the risk. Naturally, profanity or appeals to subvert the law should not be tolerated, and any speaker who abuses the privilege should lose access to the microphone.

4. Many activists have no real understanding of the legal and financial structure of school systems. As a result, student activists often ignore the complex relationship among the board of education, superintendent, principal, and teachers. They should, therefore, be exposed to this relationship and the varied responsibilities of these people in such a way as to clarify their own place in the system as students. As an example, the Lake Oswego, Oregon, schools have initiated a program entitled "Telesis," which allows students the opportunity to elect board members and to manage the school system under authentic conditions. This means that students are forced to act within the restrictions of state law and of public opinion. In this way, the place, prerogatives, and limitations of each group associated with the school become clear.

5. Overnight retreats of students and adults can be most beneficial. Prolonged periods of discussion and a joint sharing of meals tends to reduce much superficial hostility. Personal roles—assumed for purposes of the school day—can be shed, differences of opinion stemming from generation or race can be grappled with, and more candid communication established. With this done, the issues central to student-faculty-administrator cooperation are more easily identifiable and programs to resolve conflict can then begin. This technique is unusually effective but should be employed on a 24-hour basis or longer.

6. Schools on a modular schedule are in a particularly advantageous position to devise programs that will obviate student protest. Mini-courses, lasting in duration from one week to a semester, might be developed for unscheduled time. Such courses could be proposed by students or faculty, be approved by a student/faculty committee, and published on a weekly basis. This approach brings together students and teachers with similar interests—possibly ranging from mountain climbing to guitar playing—and allows an exploration of these interests until curiosity is satisfied. Since relevancy is the counterpart of curiosity, involvement should be high. These courses would ordinarily be without credit or grades.

7. Student clubs might sponsor the appearance of controversial speakers without adverse public reaction *if* the principle of balance is maintained. Where hot political issues such as Viet Nam or the draft are discussed, the school must require that a wide variety of viewpoints be presented; a panel discussion or debate is the most convenient vehicle for this. Schools must be firm in not allowing an activist group to propagandize on campus. Schools are educational institutions, dedicated to a fair consideration of all viewpoints, not the propagation of one position by any one student or adult group. Schools, like the courts, should be nonpartisan. And since teachers are restricted from partisan political activity on campus, why then should students be allowed this privilege?

8. Finally, don't forget the time-tested value of including students on various school committees, and this includes policy, curriculum, and PTA groups. Student advice is free and often fresh, even if not consistently profound.

A militant minority of students may remain untouched by these efforts. However, the vast majority of students will almost assuredly react positively. Most students will see that schools are open, changing institutions, that schools do want to be responsive, and that cooperation pays greater dividends than conflict. Students will also learn that the democratic process of proposing, discussing, and acting in concert with other groups will in the long run result in greater gains than will hostile confrontations. Perhaps they will also begin to see, through personal involvement with their community and by playing new roles within their own school, that the old classroom courses have suddenly gained a new relevancy.

But the programs proposed here pay dividends greater than the involvement of students in worthwhile causes. These programs are, in a larger sense, valuable lessons in the ways change is achieved within existing institutions, in the tempering effect of responsibility, and in the constructive value of mutual trust. And when schools begin to teach these values, they will be more humanistic institutions.

# Project EFFE: A Student-Designed Curriculum

MIMI SCHEIBER

*Walt Whitman Senior High School serves an affluent and exclusively residential area in the suburbs northwest of the District of Columbia. The school was opened seven years ago to meet a rapidly growing population. The school's curriculum is academically oriented because over 80 percent of the graduates continue with formal educational programs. The faculty of the school is relatively young and tends to be liberal in philosophy. The parents of the students are mostly college graduates and those employed usually hold administrative or supervisory positions in the Federal government.*

*The project referred to in the following article (Experiment in Free Form Education) was basically student conceived, planned, developed, scheduled, and executed. Two teachers voluntarily acted as advisers to the EFFE student committee and worked closely with the students all of the way. A small volunteer parent group together with a few teachers and administrators met occasionally to review plans and give suggestions.*

*The EFFE proposal was first brought to the school's administration in November. After some further refinement of the proposal, it was taken to the faculty Liaison Committee and eventually approved by faculty just prior to the December vacation period. The student committee and the two teacher advisers worked through the vacation period and received endorsement of the proposal by the PTA executive committee in early January. The EFFE proposal became a formal project with the blessing of the Montgomery County superintendent of schools in mid-January.*

*I regard EFFE as an expression of concern and criticism of the school's existing curriculum. However, rather than complain about the so-called Establishment, the students set out to demonstrate how things might be different and more relevant. The dedication of the EFFE committee members was amazing. They worked nights, weekends and even gave up their December vacation. The cooperative attitude of most parents was overtly expressed.*

*We believe that the students who were deeply involved in the planning and execution of EFFE are best prepared to interpret the project, and we have forwarded requests for articles, materials, etc., to them for response.*

Daryl W. Shaw, *Principal*

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*The author of the main article is Mimi Scheiber, who graduated in 1969 from Walt Whitman and who is now at Swarthmore College. Miss Scheiber's article is preceded by an introduction by Walt Whitman's principal, Daryl W. Shaw.*

FOR ONE WEEK last March, EFFE happened to Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland. During EFFE—the Experiment in Free Form Education—grades, attendance, and required courses were retired for the week. In their place, courses as varied and as strange to high school as Yoga, Black Identity, the Laser, and Comparative Religion were taught by students and guest speakers as well as Walt Whitman teachers. Over 200 of the school's 2,240 students worked as volunteer aides in such places as local elementary schools, Congressmen's offices, and the Voice of America studios. Some courses—Computer Programing, Governing the City of Washington, Hiking on the Appalachian Trail—took their classes far from the school building.

EFFE not only took the students out of the school, it also brought a willing community into the school. Approximately 150 guest teachers held courses and about 75 parents served as hostesses or car pool drivers.

EFFE also changed school in subtle ways. Students had designed their own study plans in a three-way contract with parents and the school. During the week they could sit in other classes or continue an interesting class without rigid attendance pressure—and without bells. This kind of independence and mutual working respect was summed up by one student: "It's more like college."

Other small things contributed to the changed atmosphere: the many small group discussions, the flexible scheduling of classes in two-hour blocks or all-day marathons. Even the presence of outside speakers, themselves stimulated by contact with interested high school students, was an exciting new factor.

For many, EFFE week was charged with an additional excitement. For the group of students who had worked on EFFE since its beginning the previous fall, it had become a mission, which would prove itself that week. And the enormous amount of work in preparation for EFFE—finding leaders for courses, preparing a catalogue of courses, and finally registering over 2,000 students and assigning teachers to classes—could only have been done through their dedication to an unproved idea.

The idea of EFFE originated in October, 1968, during a teacher-student bull session. From the beginning its aim was high—to demonstrate what might be good or better in high school education. Weekly planning meetings, open to everyone, began and a suggestion box was placed in the main office. When the proposal took shape, the faculty, students, PTA, and superintendent of schools endorsed the plan.

The first step was canvassing parents, teachers, and organizations to determine who might employ students in work experience or who might lead suggested courses. The result of this was a preliminary catalogue that went to students in February; from the reaction to this, tentative interest in courses could be estimated. Placing of students in jobs began at this point also. Refinement and withdrawals of courses, and much drudgery, were necessary before the final catalogue appeared in early March.

By now EFFE had grown into something quite different from its original, somewhat formless ideal. A certain amount of structure had proved necessary: many classes needed definite registration, and students did have to submit a schedule. But another unexpected development had been the

overwhelming range of subjects finally offered, from aerodynamics to existentialism, auto mechanics to speed reading. And perhaps most impressive of the unforeseen elements was the effectiveness of a small group of students, teachers, and parents working together, with no single authority's guidance, toward making EFFE a reality. It was at this point that P.T.A. President John Howard said, "If EFFE never went further than today, I would still say it was worthwhile."

In the last frantic weeks before EFFE—filled with last-minute student registration, classroom assignments, and firming up of teacher commitments—the project began to receive the attention of many people outside of school. A board of education film crew moved in; curriculum development members and representatives from other schools sat in on planning meetings. EFFE was clearly going to happen, and its message began to be picked up by others.

By the end of EFFE week, it was clear that EFFE meant many different things to many people. To people in educational planning, it meant the implementation of many ideas on structural flexibility and curriculum, some already known and tried in County schools. It also gave an indication of subjects high school students were really interested in: philosophy, psychology, and speed reading were among the most popular.

To most students, EFFE meant much greater freedom than they were used to, both in the planning for the project and in the variety and flexibility of the programs offered. While many courses, such as Introduction to Russian, could provide only a quick exposure to material, they succeeded, by their very existence, in stretching the potential of a high school curriculum.

One girl, who had played a key role in EFFE planning from the start, said at the end of the week, "If EFFE has meant anything, no one should want to come back to school Monday." In the sense that school should not be the same, she was right. Although school began again the following Monday, plans for a continuation of EFFE next year had already started. Most were pressing for an extension in some way—either a longer EFFE of the same kind, or an EFFE-type program within the school week. And these plans were being followed and supported by an enthusiastic administration.

EFFE was not an experiment in the rigorous sense of the word. To give it a scientific evaluation would have killed the very spirit of freedom and flexibility. The most important evaluation was in the mind of each participant, but the committee did recognize "the need for some measure of the program's success."

The opinions of five groups that had a perspective on EFFE—the Whitman faculty, the guest teachers, the employers, the parents, and the students themselves—were sought. Although the school's teachers were EFFE's harshest critics, complaining that some students cut school or behaved irresponsibly, they also praised the opportunity they had to teach something new, use new methods, and meet new students. The guest teachers and employers were uniformly enthusiastic. The vast majority indicated their willingness to participate in such a program again.

The EFFE workers were delighted by the response of the parents. Nine out of ten indicated their willingness to support such a program in the future and seven out of ten to work in it. Most of the parents who were critical of the program viewed EFFE as "a product of an inherently dangerous student power movement."

But the unique part of EFFE, and the part which would mark its lasting significance to everyone involved in it, was its magic—the sense of doing something positive, the intensity of week-long experiment, the miraculous working cooperation involving students, teachers, principals, and the community. It was in these ways a truly educational experiment.

*An Exercise in Freedom*

# Student Government That Works

RICK SUTTON

WHAT CAN student leaders do to stimulate participation in the life of the school and deal with student dissent?

At Firestone High in Akron, Ohio, they replaced their student council with a 20-member student-teacher coalition, half students, half teachers, elected by students and faculty. This group has the power to legislate in broad areas of mutual interest, so long as the legislation does not violate directives from the board of education or affect the budget adopted by the board. It can even override the principal's veto.

Revolutionary? You bet. But not frightening. Quite the contrary. The coalition has adopted a number of sensible and forward-looking regulations, in such areas as the dress code and student discipline. Curriculum may be next.

The concept evolved during a period of increasing dissatisfaction with the existing student council when I was a junior. I developed an idea for a new form of school government and presented a rough draft to one of my teachers, then to the student council adviser. Those were the first steps in what proved to be a long-drawn-out process before the coalition became a reality.

After examining the original proposal, the council responded enthusiastically and predicted ultimate success. However, it was six months before council members finally completed their revisions and recommendations. This time lapse lessened the initial impetus of the idea among students. It was largely through the efforts of the school newspaper that the student body was kept aware of the concept.

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*Rick Sutton developed the idea of the Firestone High School Student-Teacher Coalition, served on its Constitutional Committee, and later acted as vice-president of his creation. Rick was graduated from Firestone High in June, 1970, and is now attending Florida Presbyterian College.*

But in the fall of the 1969-70 school year, Principal William Tenney began taking an active part to ensure the coalition's quick implementation. The man who would seemingly have the best reasons for opposing the plan worked incessantly in its behalf. He organized a faculty advisory board to assist in presenting the teachers' recommendations. He then combined the advisory board with several key council members to form a constitutional committee, which worked steadily to resolve differences and then draft the final form of the coalition's constitution.

At last the coalition was to be officially presented to members of the school. Meetings, assemblies, and open forums were held to educate the school's population about the basic concepts of the proposed legislature. The fate of the coalition then rested with the students and teachers, who would cast the deciding votes for or against new government. The results were highly favorable; both parties were nearly unanimous. Election of representatives followed quickly. After nearly a year of debate and delay, Firestone High School's Student-Teacher Coalition was ready for action.

Before discussing achievements, it may be well to understand the coalition's structure and strengths. Each representative has an equal vote on all issues before the assembly. A key to coalition effectiveness is the equal division between students and teachers, 10 of each. This division of power stresses both the opportunities and responsibilities that the students have accepted.

Raised to a status equivalent to that of the faculty member, students respond by exercising their best judgment and maturity as they debate and vote on important issues. Students possess the power both to block legislation and to propose responsible bills that will merit the support of their faculty counterparts.

Teachers have new opportunities, too. Not only can they now present their views on improving education to a public forum, they can translate those views into effective legislation.

Most important, however, is the fact that these traditionally opposing factions can sit down together and peacefully iron out their differences. Each side becomes aware of the other's position, so that fair solutions that consider all aspects of the situation can be discovered.

Representatives are elected by their peers. The senior class sends four representatives; the junior and sophomore classes each elect three delegates. No academic or other requirements are imposed upon the student candidates.

The Firestone faculty is divided into eight departments; each department selects one of its members to represent it on the coalition. The entire faculty also votes for two at-large representatives, who may be from any section of the teaching staff. The only requirement for faculty members of the coalition is that they have at least one year's teaching experience at Firestone High.

There are, of course, limits on the legislative powers of the coalition. It must pass laws in its jurisdiction by a three-fifths majority. This restriction is designed to elevate the quality of legislation that emerges, as well as to assure minimal broad-based support for policies that the coalition adopts. After passage, all bills are sent to the principal for his consideration. He

may either sign them into law, allow them to become effective without his approval, or veto the proposals altogether.

But in a specially devised system of checks and balances, the coalition may override the veto of the principal by a nine-tenths majority. As impractical as this large majority may seem, it can place the students and teachers in an ultimately powerful bargaining position, if they are united behind a cause that is blocked only by the opinions of one person.

The range of areas in which the coalition may pass legislation is nearly limitless. As noted, the organization's constitution specifies only that (1) laws must not violate directives from the board of education and (2) laws must not affect the finances of the school. This permits the legislature to delve into almost all aspects of curriculum and into many areas of administration.

The coalition also serves as the official voice of the school, issuing recommendations on subjects over which it has no jurisdiction. Once again, emphasis is placed upon decision making by the group most directly affected by the educational system, and not by a single administrator.

The 20 members who formed that first coalition realized several of the special hopes of the originators. For one thing, they represented a broad range of personalities and ideologies. The student members included a strong element of Firestone's *nouveau-gauche*, a faction long alienated from the mainstream of school activities. Faculty representatives, although labeled conservative, were generally considered fair and open-minded. The major implication of this diversification was that the coalition would not be divided into opposing camps of students and teachers. The variety of political thought that existed in each group ensured maximum individual participation.

In the brief semester the coalition has been in effect, it has explored many areas of mutual concern to students and teachers. Laws emerging from this study have included a completely revised dress code, a new system of disciplinary procedures, and an assembly operations bill. The legislature has also investigated aspects of curriculum, such as final examinations and new classes, as well as administration reform in policies on smoking and off-campus permits. Often, even though no tangible results can be realized, effective dialogue among students and teachers has increased understanding in many areas.

The ultimate value of the Student-Teacher Coalition, then, would appear to be positive. It is true that immaturity and lack of respect have at times damaged relationships among members. The new legislature has also been criticized for moving too slowly and for not concentrating on major objectives. But these could be the failings of any legislature. To its credit, the coalition has increased the volume and quality of communication among all elements of the school community and has served as the school's most effective method of resolving differences. Ultimate success will depend on Firestone's desire to fulfill completely the coalition's purposes, and on its continued interest in this unique experiment in the democratic process.

# Ridgefield Student Council: Alive and Well and Working for Change

JOANN N. BODURTHA AND DR. HAROLD E. HEALY

*We want to be heard! We want a meeting of the student body. We want the administration to listen to us. The student council doesn't represent the kids. These and similar statements were made one morning in May, 1967, when approximately 50 students refused to go to class and demonstrated on the lawn in front of the Ridgefield (Conn.) High School.*

*How the Ridgefield High School Student Council moved into action to open the lines of communication and to work toward a solution to these demands is the subject of the following article which offers some specific directions to student councils across the country.*

THE LEADERS of the demonstration asked for a conference with the principal. They informed him that students would come back to class if a school-wide grievance meeting were held to reorganize the student body and to air their concerns.

The principal refused the request. He told demonstration leaders that they and those outside the school community could not be recognized as duly-elected representatives of the student body. The principal told them that all student requests for improving the school should come through the student council.

The leaders of the demonstration were fully aware of the administration's stand and the role that students must play if they are to have their demands recognized. On the same evening students attended a meeting of the board of education where they stated their reasons for demonstrating and their feeling that there was poor communication between the principal and the students. They pointed out that the student council was not representative of the student body and was ineffective in bringing about change. Board members told the students to go back to school and work out their problems with the principal.

### *Within the Council System*

Next morning the demonstration leaders informed the administration that they wished to work for change through the proper channels. *From this point on, the leaders worked through the student council.*

A student board representing all classes was set up as a special committee of the student council. Its purpose was to formulate and discuss rules and regulations and to help solve problems relating to the high school. Slowly this student board dissolved as the student council became more responsive to the student body.

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*Joann Bodurtha was president of the Ridgefield High School Student Council in 1969-70. Dr. Harold Healy is principal of the school.*

The improvement of the council was best reflected in this past year as the council tried to involve many students in its activities. The focus was turned from social events to the significant inspection and review of all areas of the school program. Each council subcommittee was headed by a council representative who chose primarily non-council members to participate on his committee. The accent was on meaningful student-faculty-administration discussion and subsequent constructive action.

### *Responsive Action*

The council worked hard to listen and respond quickly to students' requests this year. Suggestion boxes were placed in most homerooms; homeroom reports were given; mid-year and final reports by all council members were distributed to the student body; the council meetings were open; and a thought-provoking questionnaire was administered personally by council members to the student body at the end of the year.

A model for council action on specific issues was the process leading to permission for girls to wear slacks to school. A group of students sat down, talked, researched, and developed a presentation to be given to the faculty in support of this change. The faculty subsequently voted and administration approved the change. In the spring, it was agreed that all students should be allowed to wear shorts to school.

The council also felt that new students should be made to feel especially welcome and to feel a real part of the school. New students to Ridgefield were sent a letter, assigned buddies, and given a talk, tour, and picnic prior to the opening of school. An orientation program was also presented to the entire incoming sophomore class.

### *Increased Communication*

The council placed a large monthly calendar in the main hall which cited all holidays and school, social, and athletic functions. Council members helped the school calendar committee by encouraging scheduling of events long in advance. In another effort to keep the students and the community informed on school activities, the council submitted a column entitled "Youth Booth" to the local newspaper each week. The column gave council, club, athletic, social, and student news.

The council also examined the 1969-70 handbook and decided a change was due. The '70-'71 handbook, they agreed, should be in pocket folder form with school rules on the inside and the inter-scholastic athletic schedule on the back. The council and administration plan to insert additional sheets of supplementary information.

### *Added Services*

With the help of the PTSA, the council made arrangements for each student to have his photo taken and imprinted on an official school identification card at no cost to the student. Presentation of this card allowed a student to buy a ticket at the door of a dance. Council members also worked with the local movie theater to provide each student with a card entitling him to reduced rates.

The council performed various other service functions throughout the year including selling tickets, acting as guides, and proctoring the halls.

### *Innovative Projects*

Early in the year the council picked a group of 30 students to represent the student body in a newly formed Drug Committee. During its meetings, ideas were thrashed around in an effort to establish a basic curriculum and to determine methods of implementing it.

Students were also members of the Faculty Assembly Committee, as well as a separate student seminar committee. Student expressions of interests resulted in more diversified assemblies.

Seminars seemed the best method for utilizing community resources and maximizing student exposure to many fields. Questionnaires were distributed to students asking their preferences for seminar topics. But the task of organizing and implementing them proved too great for the students.

In another innovative move, students sat with the faculty members of the Discipline Committee for the first time this year. As a result, it was decided that the principal and assistant principal should meet with all students through the English classes to explain and to discuss discipline at the high school. The effectiveness of these discussions varied, but it was generally agreed that this direct exchange of ideas between students and administration was good.

The council often looked to neighboring schools for help and inspiration. On an exchange day students went to another high school, spoke with students, teachers, and faculty, saw the school's Council meeting, and had a chance to compare their own school with the visited one. Active participation in a statewide student council federation and in a local conference also helped to widen the council's outlook and to encourage greater council action.

### *More Flexible Schedule*

Study hall teachers met with a council subcommittee to discuss the assigned study hall situation. A system was worked out whereby the auditorium functioned as a silent study hall and the cafeteria as a talking-eating area. The student also had the option of going to the library.

As the weather got warmer, it became apparent that a lunch period held outdoors would provide students with a pleasant alternative to the lunch period in the cafeteria. The council worked through a subcommittee to set up rules and to inform students that they would be held responsible for their actions.

The council also developed a code of behavior for students using the library, stressing the importance of the library as a center of learning.

### *Social Activities*

Working with the Booster Club, the council sponsored a homecoming weekend with football game, dance king and queen, parade, class float competition, and alumni invitations. Because the winter carnival was slushed out and the spring carnival rained out, only dances could be held. The council's biggest social event, however, was a donkey basketball game.

To further open lines of communication, the council invited the board of education, the superintendent of schools, the curriculum director, the principal, and the assistant principal to a dinner prepared and served by the advanced foods class. Brief and informal talks about individual committee work were given by each council member.

### *Updated Curriculum*

The Curriculum Committee moved in all directions this year. Drawing upon faculty members for guidance, it supported changes in senior English courses and proposed three new courses, black studies, psychology, and data processing, for the 1970-71 school year. It met with cross-sections of the student body to discuss curriculum, revamped the format for presentation of the 1970-71 curriculum to the underclassmen to include student-staffed booths, and conducted an extensive poll of recent high school graduates to see exactly what sort of preparation Ridgefield High School had given.

### *Community Involvement*

Because the council was getting more politically and socially aware, it sought to better define its community and national responsibilities. Participation in "Let Us Vote," support of Earth Day, and the laying of some groundwork for local organizations ensued.

Early in the year, students signed up for participation in a student council-sponsored town boards program. Names were pulled out of a hat and groups of four to seven students were assigned to each of 10 town boards including the board of education, board of finance, parks and recreation commission, and flood and erosion board. The superintendent of schools and the first selectman supported the program. Adult members of each of the boards voted to accept the students as non-voting members in every case. Students sat at the board tables, participated in discussions, distributed and received materials, and added a new younger dimension to the town government.

### *Future Plans*

The 1969-70 council worked hard to make the transition to the 1970-71 council as smooth as possible. Both councils worked together at the end of this year and produced programs for the 1970-71 school year. This year, vending machines will be installed; an academic achievement roll will be established; and a second-hand book store will be set up. The 1970-71 council worked over the summer to build upon these programs.

The effectiveness of last year's student council program is reflected in the following comments by Ridgefield students: "The faculty is willing to see the point of view of the students"; "The kids here participate more"; and "Student council's not bad, not bad at all!"

This year's council is currently studying issues of importance to the school, specifically, the discipline system, the attendance philosophy, curriculum, ways to better communication and open discussion, and means of approaching current ideas in the world. No one has all the answers. However, the spirit of cooperative effort, sincere talk, and definitive action exhibited at Ridgefield High School are good bases for tomorrow.

# Creating an Action Council—Now

STEVE WIECKERT

EVERYONE knows how effective student councils are. Everyone knows the empty feeling you can get after sitting through the average council meeting. Everyone knows what the average student's opinion is of student council.

Yet most of us can also see what the council can become. Most of us hope for the day when student council and the students will be the same voice and have the same needs and ideas—when the council and the students will become one active and purposeful unit.

But precious few have dared (bothered?) to act, to fight for what they believed in, and to work for what they thought was right. Precious few have dedicated their time and energies to set the council back on its feet.

Isn't it about time we relieved them and did our share?

## *Do It Now*

Every youth organization has created a demanding attitude of do-it-now around itself. What about student council? When will we decide to overhaul our organization? Now is the time for us to get moving, too. Instead of demanding action of others, let us demand it of ourselves.

Many people will now say, "Congratulations; very fine words. But how can we possibly do this?" My answer: Keep reading!

The solution to the problem is to create *action* councils: councils with internal organizations capable of utilizing the energies of large numbers of students and of focusing this energy on commonly agreed upon objectives, councils that always have a wide variety of relevant activities.

How is an action council organized? A book could be written on the subject but, since space is limited, only the major procedures for such an undertaking will be outlined here.

## *Have a Purpose*

All organizations must have a purpose. The purpose of student council is to produce good citizens of tomorrow by getting students involved in relevant activities today. Put differently, this means: students, *the great majority of students in each school,* should be involved, *be active in council programs,* in relevant activities, *relating to any action, project, technique, procedure, or policy of student council, from its involvement in national issues to its production of films.* All council projects should be measured against this purpose before they are undertaken; all council goals must in some way be related to it.

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Each school must design a council purpose acceptable to all. It should be endorsed by the students at the beginning of each school year. If this purpose is well-known and accepted, it will act as a unifying force for all students.

### *Be Active*

The activities program is the foundation of an action council. Each council should undertake numerous projects and the entire list of proposed activities should be given an official vote of approval by the student body and faculty at the beginning of each school year. Never should an activity be taken off the calendar without replacing it with another.

### *Presidents Must Lead the Way*

The duties of the council president are often more than the constitution states. However varied the duties may seem on the surface, one basic qualification is required for all tasks—the ability to communicate with people. The president must be an expert on leading people. He succeeds because of his ability to "sell" all council personnel on doing what will most benefit the student body. As president of my junior high school student council, I learned several things about being president which may be helpful to others:

- President power is persuasion power.
- The president's resolution should be: If the council fails, it is my fault.
- All students must work together for commonly agreed upon goals.
- Visible, challenging goals are needed to make people do their best.
- The president must coordinate the overall action program.

### *Create Workable Committees*

The committee system is the backbone of an action council. Extremely effective committees are needed for successful action councils—not big committees that are totally independent, but specialized committees, each having specific purposes and each doing its share to make each activity successful.

Five basic committees for all councils should be: the Executive Committee, the general brain for the management of the system; the Projects Committee, which plans and coordinates activities; the Publicity Committee, which makes student council news known; the Evaluation Committee, which analyzes activities to improve others in the future; and the Documents Committee, which records activities on paper, film, or tape.

### *Get Off to a Good Start*

Students must be given a share in the decision-making process if they are to become involved in student council work. During council meetings, role playing, brainstorming, and buzz sessions should also be used.

Agenda written by a large number of students, not just the executive committee, should be set up for each meeting. Action sessions, meetings of three to five council representatives, should also be held to discuss ways

to get more action—and less trivia—out of council meetings. These small group sessions should be held regularly.

During the first few days and weeks, council members should work hard to make the council active. This will create an action habit that should last all year. Goals are objectives that tie the word "success" to visible, tangible things. Keep them in mind.

To get a council into action requires a certain something—an activating force. This force is student interest and is generated when students see their own ideas put to work. The outcome of this interest will be the involvement needed to make student council work.

Activating a council is a big challenge. But, with work, it can be done. Are you willing to try?