

SDSCA NEWSLETTER FROM THE HILLS

Gary Linn SDSCA Executive Director

SDSCA campaigning and officer expectations

1. Fill out your intention to run for office form. (on SDHSAA page)
2. Have 2 choices for an office to run for.
3. Have supplies with you at convention to make posters, etc., to run for either office you want to hold.
4. Posters are the only physical things you can have to advertise. Get out and talk to advisors and students. No candy or other objects to hand out are allowed.
5. Depending on the venue, there may be only certain places where your posters may be displayed.
6. Prepare a speech no longer than 2 and one-half minutes in length.
7. You will be involved in impromptu questions on stage too. Questions will vary that you must answer.
8. Speeches should be about you, what you can do for this position on the SDSCA board, or region board. No other visuals may be used while you are giving your speech.
9. If you are elected to SDSCA board, you must sign a document that states you will be accountable to our expectations or you may be removed from the board.
10. You will attend at least 3 of the 4 meetings the SDSCA board holds to plan the convention.

Workshops! Workshops!

I hope all is going well with your workshops this fall. I know a lot of planning has taken place and hopefully they will be a great success! With all of the talented advisors and student leaders in our state, I'm sure they will be. Our president is trying to attend several of these workshops across the state as well. Don't forget to talk about the officer intent form. I will be including some more information about this in my newsletter. Thanks for all your commitment!!!



Recommendation Letter FAQ

What kind of voice and tone of voice should I use?

Remember that college admission officers spend on average 15–20 minutes on the entire application. So, they are looking for clarity and information, not elegant prose. Speak/write naturally. Think of your letter as a conversation with fellow educators who want to know what you think about the student. They don't need fancy language; they need to know the kid.

If I think the student is a real star, can I say so?

Absolutely! Colleges always want to hear about genuine “blue chippers.” Just remember that not every student can be a blue chipper. Be discriminating; show that you can recognize true excellence when you see it, that you know the difference between a local hero and that truly magical student who would shine anywhere. No matter how much affection you have for a student, don't let that cloud your perspective. That way, as colleges read your letters over time, they will come to consider you a reliable, valuable judge of talent. Your word will carry weight.

What if I'm not so sure I can write a positive letter for a student? Should I still agree to write the letter when asked?

If you cannot write a positive letter for a student, you should decline a request for a recommendation. It is not fair to the student

if you agree to write a letter in which you cannot be positive.

What if two students—one slightly stronger than the other but both of whom I feel very enthusiastic about—ask me to write recommendations to many of the same colleges? Should I give the slightly weaker one a slightly more enthusiastic letter?

Your responsibility is to write the most thorough and enthusiastic letter possible for each candidate. Leave it to the colleges to make the ultimate decision. Remember that, in this case, you would represent a common denominator; a stronger letter for the weaker student might mean the weaker student gets admitted and the stronger one does not.

Is it appropriate to write about disciplinary trouble, family turmoil, medical leaves, or diagnosed learning differences in a teacher recommendation?

Check with the administration and the college guidance office before including any sensitive, personal information about the student in your letter. That sort of disclosure is generally the responsibility of the school or counselor letter, not the teacher recommendation.

Should I fill out the check boxes on the recommendation forms?

Find out your school's policy on this. In some schools, particularly where counselors and teachers have large caseloads, the check

boxes help manage the large volume of recommendations that need to be written. In other schools, check boxes are seen as diminishing or muting the student's story—a shortcut to a decision that does not do that story justice.

What are some common mistakes in teacher recommendations?

- Forgetting to sign the letter.
- Failing to identify the course taught or in what capacity the teacher knew the student.
- Using too much of the letter to describe the course and the teacher's background.
- Making reference to the student's physical appearance, political leanings, religion, etc. Unless one of those factors is central to the academic story of the student, it does not belong in a recommendation.
- Writing a customized letter for each college. One substantive and thorough letter will suffice. Besides, a letter customized to the individual college can lead to the next common error ...
- Putting the name of one college in a letter being sent to another college.
- Forgetting to keep a copy of each recommendation in case a student needs it later.
- Using judgmental language without evidence to back it up. Only give observable, verifiable facts.

PUT THIS INTO PRACTICE

BY LYN FISCUS

Engage your chapter or council by participating in this interactive activity

Nuts and Raisins: Teaching the Basics of "Parli Pro"



Objective

Students will practice making, debating, and voting on motions following parliamentary procedure, or "parli pro."

Materials

- Assorted bags of items that might go in trail mix: raisins, nuts, M&Ms, etc.
- A few odd items, either that students might not like (e.g., mustard-flavored pretzels), that aren't likely to be found in trail mix (e.g., a can of corn), or that aren't edible (e.g., box of paper clips)
- Handout with order of precedence for motions (see Parli Pro Resources)
- Snack-sized plastic baggies

Time Required

45 minutes

Procedure

Teach the basics of using parliamentary procedure to students before attempting this activity. Check the Parli Pro Resources sidebar for some good sources of information online, or refer to NASSP's *Parliamentary Procedure Without Stress*, available in the National Student Council, NHS, or NJHS store.

Assemble the potential trail mix materials at the front of the room. Let students know that their task for the day is to create trail mix for everyone to eat using the materials gathered. Go through the items one at a time to let everyone know what is available. Their job is to determine what to include and to decide how much of each item is needed. Students will use parliamentary procedure to make these decisions. Start by opening the floor for a motion.

Preside over a meeting in which students make motions, second them, debate the motions, and vote on them. In the process, they will also amend motions, table some, call the question, and practice other procedures. Someone inevitably moves to include an item that people don't want, and that motion will be voted down or die for lack of a second. Practice using both voice votes and a show of hands; explain how to call for a division of the house if a voice vote is unclear.

With the goal of creating a trail mix they can all eat, this activity engages lively discussion and provides opportunities to practice many aspects of parli pro. Once the trail mix is completed, have your officers divide it into equal portions in the snack baggies and distribute it to the students.

Processing

While students are eating their trail mix, engage them in a discussion that evaluates their use of parli pro with such questions as:

- How did parli pro make the meeting run efficiently?
- How does parli pro help ensure the voice of the minority is heard?
- What are some drawbacks to using parli pro?
- For what types of situations is this meeting management tool best used? •

Lyn Fiscus teaches leadership and advises student government at South Lakes High School in Reston, VA, and would like to thank Marcia Edmundson of Prince George High School in Virginia for the idea for this lesson.

Parli Pro Resources

- Parliamentary charts and handouts—concise handouts and charts detailing how to handle different types of motions; useful for teaching parli pro. www.jimslaughter.com/handouts.cfm
- Parliamentary Procedure Basics—a useful video from 4-H in which students demonstrate various elements of parliamentary procedure. <http://tinyurl.com/parliyoutube>
- Parliamentary Basics from the National Association of Parliamentarians. www.parliamentarians.org/about/parliamentary-basics
- Parliamentary Procedure at a Glance—a concise listing of terms, motions, and procedures. <http://tinyurl.com/parliglance>

TAKE TEN

As a busy adviser, your time is especially valuable, so we've rounded up tips and resources just for you that only take 10 minutes or less.



FILMINUTE

For a fun escape from the classroom, check out www.filminute.com and enjoy a quick flick. Filminute is an international film festival that happens every October. Leading up to the festival, tons of one-minute films are posted online—each shorter than a pop song. Filminute has all of the previous winners on its website, dating back to the festival's inception in 2006. They might only be 60 seconds in length, but each film still manages to present a compelling story. Some have big budgets, others get by with no more than a handheld camera and a lone character in the woods. Lights, camera, action!

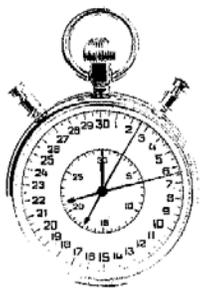
PLAN A VACATION

Sometimes just the thought of a delightful reprieve from the daily grind is enough to calm one's nerves. Don't just daydream about a vacation—set aside 10 minutes of your day to plan out your next getaway! Use the following guide to planning your next vacation over a series of days, and you'll find yourself soaking up the sun or taking in the fresh mountain air in no time.

- Decide where to go.
- Choose the top three things you want to do once you're there.
- Decide on the length of time needed to do those things, and narrow down the days that would work with your schedule.
- Research costs and plan a budget. Consider ways you might be able to save up for the trip before leaving.
- Check for last-minute deals.
- Make plans—call hotels, make reservations, lock down pet sitters and babysitters, acquire necessary travel ID, and book flights. Also be sure to call your credit card companies to alert them that you will be traveling.



Do NOTHING



It might seem like a simple task, but after your first three cups of coffee in the morning, you might find that doing nothing for two minutes is a lot more difficult than you anticipate. Visit DoNothingFor2Minutes.com to take the challenge. This clever site displays a countdown (with two minutes on the clock) in front of a calming ocean-view background. Let the soothing sounds of seagulls and breaking waves chill your mood.

Be aware, though, as the site makes perfectly clear, "Just relax and listen to the waves. Don't touch your mouse or keyboard." If you do, you'll have to try doing nothing for two minutes over and over until you succeed.

DOCUMENT YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

It's easy for busy professionals to get lost in schedules and checking off tasks, all the while blowing past accomplishments without taking a moment to enjoy them. What about allowing your accomplishments to not only relax you, but to work for you? Annotate your professional accomplishments—academic, charitable, and career related—on LinkedIn. Start an online portfolio on About.me to keep a digital scrapbook of easily updateable and shareable milestones. If apps are your thing, try using WorkSmart, which allows you to note accomplishments on your phone, set goals, and send status reports to friends and family whom you ask to hold you accountable.

