

The following article has been accepted for publication in the Student Times section of ACDA's *Choral Journal*.

STUDENT LEADERSHIP: FRIEND OR FOE?
Steps for developing effective student leadership

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Whether within a musical ensemble or an ACDA student chapter, developing a process that discovers and nurtures leadership skills is essential. By defining the organization's goals, identifying diligent student leaders, and selecting specific and meaningful activities, advisors and teachers can ensure effective student leadership.

Defining Your Goal:

Effective: adjective, 1) producing a decided, decisive, or desired intent

The process of determining what result an organization wants to accomplish is the first step in developing effective leadership. In his book, *The Magic of Thinking Big*, David Schwartz says, "Goals are as essential to success as air is to life. No one ever stumbles into success without a goal. No one ever lives without air. Get a clear fix on where you want to go."ⁱ

For students, identifying the reasons why an organization or ensemble is important to their individual lives may be more challenging. Advisors and teachers must understand that the values of those they are overseeing may differ from their own value system and goals that are merely "handed down" are destined for disaster.ⁱⁱ

The discovery process gives members ownership of the goals. Ownership helps members develop positive relationships with one another, relationships built on the foundation of a common goal.ⁱⁱⁱ If a student does not share an interest in common goals of the organization how can they be expected to contribute to its success?

Suggestions for student involvement in the development of an organization's goal

- 1** Hold a beginning of the year talk. Discuss student and teacher expectations. Find common goals. Discuss fears. Is the teacher too rigid? Should there be more "fun" activities? *Teachers and advisors beware. Make sure to hear the students' voices and not vice versa.*
- 2** Have students turn in lists of their ideas on what the organization or ensemble's goals should be for the year.
- 3** Frequently evaluate the organization or ensemble's goals. Are the goals being accomplished? Has something changed? Does the goal need to be adjusted to produce a positive outcome?

Once members of the organization or ensemble have brainstormed their ideas and provided input, the development of a concise, clearly stated mission statement can help

the membership determine how to go forward to accomplish their shared intent.

Examples of Organization's Mission Statements

1 University of North Texas Student Chapter of ACDA

- To provide choral music students with skills, information, and experiences not typically provided in the required curriculum. Lectures, pre-professional training, and enrichment events will be offered in an environment that interests students both socially and academically.^{iv}

2 Newman Smith HS Orchestra Mission Statement

- To develop in each student an appreciation of the art of music as part of general culture; to teach techniques of orchestra music expression; to discover and develop the talents of students in the field of orchestral music; to develop knowledge and skills in listening to orchestra music and in reading and performing orchestral music.^v

3 Lake Highlands HS Booster Club Statement

- The Lake Highlands Area Choir Booster Club is a non-profit organization of parents, who come together to help support and enrich the choral music education program in the Lake Highlands attendance area.^{vi}

The development of this statement becomes the foundation on which the organization is built and paves the road to take the next step: finding *effective* manpower.

Identifying the servicepersons:

Effective: adjective, 2) ready for service or action

Student leaders are the power behind an organization or ensemble; they are the ones who get the job done.^{vii} Once an organization has identified its goals, advisors and teachers must identify individuals in their program who demonstrate *action*.^{viii}

Rather than allow the selection process to be based solely on popularity, advisors, directors, *and* the general membership of the organization or ensemble should devise a set of criteria to aid in the selection of student leaders. Listed below are some suggested criteria to remember when identifying *effective* leaders:

1. Choose mature leaders capable of handling extra responsibilities.

- It is unfair to the general membership of an organization, when individuals unprepared for more responsibility, are selected for leadership roles.^{ix}
- Remember to identify individuals *ready for service or action*. Popularity does not constitute readiness.
- Teachers and advisors should remember that the students are constantly reshaping their ideas and belief systems. Help the general membership identify individuals who demonstrate a stable level of maturity and commitment.

2. Select leaders who are goal oriented and focus their energy on accomplishing the goals of the organization or ensemble.

- The leader of an organization must believe in the goals of the organization and be prepared to act responsibly.
- A clear objective is not enough. Even terrific, reachable goals will fail without follow through.^x Student leaders must be action oriented.
- Effective leaders are problem solvers who seek solutions rather than dwell on problems.^{xi}

3. *Identify leaders who demonstrate exceptional character.*

- Student leaders should remember one point: *student leaders serve others*. The purpose of student leaders is not the prestige or power, but rather the charge to help accomplish the goals of the larger membership. Effective student leaders avoid making others feel inferior because of their position.^{xii}
- Advisors, directors, and the membership of the ensemble or organization should find leaders who are “selfless, persistent (who can “stay the course”), affable, honest, faithful, and loyal,” says Tim Lautzenheiser, author and nationally recognized advocate for music education.^{xiii}

Leadership is constantly evolving. Ensembles and organizations should examine their leadership team frequently and hold their chosen officers accountable to the criteria by which they were selected. When possible, ensure effectiveness by assigning leadership roles based on the strengths of the individual.

Going Forward:

Effective: adjective, 3) Actually in operation or in force; functioning

Once the membership of the organization has identified a clear direction for the group and identified individuals committed to the action of the group, activities must be designed to support the mission statement.

Each individual must accept and embrace their role as a part of the organization. Leaders must delegate responsibilities and set the pace for the organization while the general membership must give their energy in a supportive way.^{xiv} Throughout the entire process, the focus must remain on the welfare of the group. The director or advisor and the leadership must remain focused on the general membership and the goals laid out for all.^{xv}

Examples of possible organizational activities:

1 *Social, “getting to know you” activities including:*

- ice cream socials
- pizza parties
- pool parties
- game nights
- favorite choral CD night
- graduation send off events

2 *Pre-professional training*

- lectures and presentations by music professionals
 - concerts of school, church, and community choirs
- 3 *Volunteer Activities*
- adopt-a-singer by providing free voice lessons to deserving middle school students in the area.
 - assist with area choral festivals and music events.
 - usher various concerts and recitals
- 4 *Student/Membership initiated practice times*
- host sectional rehearsals in students' homes
 - plan an evening to share favorite choral works
- 5 *Small Group Performance Opportunities*
- create caroling groups for the holidays
 - create val-a-gram groups for Valentine's day

In Conclusion

Effective: adjective, 4) producing a deep or vivid impression; striking.

Developing leadership should not be a task that is feared by advisors and directors. It should be viewed as an opportunity to promote the growth of an organization or ensemble by fostering a student-centered environment. By defining clear goals, identifying appropriate student leaders, and choosing membership supported activities, the development of leadership can become the *effective* friend to any musical organization.

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iii Wright, Stephen & Sayre-Adams, Jean. *Nursing Standard*, no. 19 (2005): 14-15.

iv Taylor, Joshua & McClung, Alan. "Constitution of the UNT Student Chapter of ACDA." UNT Student Chapter of ACDA. Available from <http://orgs.unt.edu/acda>. Internet; Accessed 30 March 2007.

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- ^v Dockray, C. Kenneth & Walters, Michelle. "Mission Statement for the Newman Smith HS Orchestras." Texas Music Educators Association. Available from http://www.tmea.org/027_Magazine/Resource_Center/Newman_Smith_Orch_HB.pdf. Internet; accessed 23 October 2007.
- ^{vi} O'Hern, Michael & Berrier, Terry. *Lake Highlands High School Choir Handbook*. Dallas: LHHS, 2005.
- ^{vii} Lautzenheiser, Tim. *The Joy of Inspired Teaching*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 1993. 101.
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- ^x Schwartz, David. *The Magic of Thinking Big*. New York: Cornerstone Library Publications, 1965. 135.
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- ^{xiii} Lautzenheiser, Tim. *The Joy of Inspired Teaching*. Chicago: GIA Publications, 1993. 88-90.

xiv Ibid., 92.

xv Ibid., 91-92.