

True Points

A newsletter for the parents of student leaders

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From where I sit by Dr. Jim Fitzgerald

“Just” is a very damaging word, isn’t it? Often it is used in sympathy but in reality, it is quite a put down.

“It’s **just** a phase.”

“It’s **just** something you have to live through.”

“**Just** take it easy.”

“**Just** try harder.”

As role models and as the support system for student leaders, we must realize the real power and limitations of words.

Words can hurt. Words can heal. Words can unite. Words can separate. We need look no further than last fall’s presidential debates to see all four of the above.

One word we use a lot in SLTP is “Inclusion.” Simply, we feel it is the primary func-

tion of student leadership.

Every school everywhere has a mission statement that alludes or infers that the school is inclusive. Yet, that is rarely the case.

Student based leadership is the only way to overcome the systematic division.

Involved students do better academically. Involved students have better attendance. The more involved students are in the school community, the safer the school is. The more involved students there are in a school, the stronger the academics become in that school. Those facts are clear.

What is also clear is that most schools have less than 30% of their stu-

dent body involved in student activities.

Active, aggressive student leaders are key to including and involving the student body.

At all of our conferences and seminars we explore the dynamics of inclusion as well as building an atmosphere within each organization to motivate its membership to become active.

A Rebel Yell

Teenagers are notorious for being rebellious—but is it an important, natural phase or something parents need to confront? Scott Larson, a nationally known speaker, explains the meaning behind rebellion and how to deal with it.

Teenagers have a need for independence. Letting teenagers rebel in areas that may not really matter (such as keeping their rooms clean) helps them begin to feel that they’re capable

of self-sufficiency.

Teenagers need to practice decision-making. Some rebellion—such as drug use or harmful influence on others—certainly requires an establishment of rules and consequences. Less harmful types of rebellion result in consequences that help teenagers learn to make better decisions. Home is the safest place for kids to fail...and get back up on their feet again.

Teenagers need to know

that you have confidence in them. When you offer confidence in your teenager’s decisions, rebellion may even become unnecessary. Assert your support for whatever decision he or she makes, even if it’s not your choice, while encouraging your teenager to include you in the process.

The College Quest

by Erin Stewart, SLTP Conference

Director

We all know what the most frequently asked question in schools is! (“How are you?”) But perhaps the second most frequently asked question, at least by the time you are a senior, is “Where do you want to go to college?” Everyone, from Ms. Sneckells, your guidance counselor, to your smelly Uncle Lou, starts off a conversation with you this way – whether you are in 6th grade or 12th. The answer can be daunting, but FEAR NOT! – there is a way to focus your energy, make your college search a little narrower, and have a legitimate answer the next time you hear this question.

Before you begin looking at college websites and mailings, ask yourself a few questions first:

In the Classroom:

1. Can I pick out a specific field of study I would like to pursue?

If the answer is yes, start looking at specialty schools – such as Mass Art, Johnson and Wales or Mass College of Pharmacy. Check rankings in Newsweek and U.S. News to see which schools rank high in your chosen program. And if you are “undecided,” don’t worry – read on for more criteria to choose from.

2. How do I learn best – am I an auditory learner

(I learn best by listening), a visual learner (I learn best by seeing), or a kinesthetic learner (I learn best by doing)?

If you are an auditory learner, do some research to find out which colleges provide lecture-style classes where you can absorb material just by listening. If you are a visual learner, check out schools that use media or technology to create a visual experience in the classroom. If you are a kinesthetic learner, look for colleges that teach through case studies, labs, and hands-on projects.

Outside the Classroom:

1. Do I like the idea of living in a big city with lots of cultural offerings, or would I feel more comfortable in a small college town where the school is just as important as the community?

2. Would I want to be challenged academically by a large competing pool of students where there are always more people to meet – or would I like to feel like a big fish in a little pond, where everyone knows each other?

3. What kind of climate do I want – am I a snow-lover or a sun-worshipper?

Other criteria to use when making a school list in-

clude: average GPA, average SAT scores, Alumni grad school and job placement, and student clubs and organizations.

The search can be daunting, but there are resources out there to help. Starting early is a good thing. Keep reading our newsletter for more tips on the College Quest – and how to avoid your smelly Uncle Lou.

5 top tips

1. Visit every school of interest (visit must include an overnight stay)
2. When being interviewed—ask plenty of questions (about available scholarships, about housing guarantees, about food service, about everything that concerns you)
3. Prepare a Personal Development Portfolio
4. Juniors should write their essays NOW—and write it about something they have done.
5. Get the best written recommendations you can.

Conference Profile-OTS

Strengthen your skills to persuade, motivate and engage your student activity group. If you are ready to take your group to the next level, OTS is for you! Join our team for this interactive seminar where you'll learn and experience the powerful keys to developing your group into a team. Some of the goals of the Officer Training Seminar are to help you:

- ⇒ Develop a purposeful and meaningful mission for your group
- ⇒ Learn the specific duties and responsibilities of each office (Secretary, Treasurer, Vice President, President, etc.)

- ⇒ Design action plans and calendars
- ⇒ Develop strategies to work through cliques and to motivate the group
- ⇒ Develop plans to create workable solutions
- ⇒ Develop a greater sense of belonging among the group's members

Throughout the OTS, all participants will experience one to one coaching and personalized feedback.

The OTS is open to officer teams only. A minimum of two officers are required. Any combination of club or activity group officers and their adviser may participate.

Designing and facilitating meaningful meetings is among the most significant responsibilities of any officer team. Too often meetings are held simply because it is meeting day. Too often meetings lack the passion that student activities deserve.

At OTS, we explore the techniques necessary to make meetings more meaningful.

Join us for two days you will never

Summer Conferences

Registrations for all our summer conferences are underway in earnest! There are just over 20 weeks to go before our summer conferences kick off. All of the applications are available online as pdf files at www.sltp.info

OTS

There is one session which is open to all forms of officer teams – from full cabi-

nets to co-captains – from clubs to classes to student government. (The team requirement is that there must be at least a pair of officers)

July 1-2

LTC

There are four sessions. Although there are just over 110 slots available at this point.

July 5-9;

July 12-16;

ALC

There are three sessions and approximately 38 slots available.

July 13-16;

July 27-30;

and Aug 3-6

TLC

There is only one session and there are 3 slots left.

July 6-9

Adviser Certification

There is only one session and there are 10 slots left.

August 3-6

The DifferenceMaker Showcase

The *DifferenceMaker Showcase* is a very special conference. We believe that service should not be a "have to." Service should be a "get to." Service is leadership in action. This conference is about expanding service opportunities, learning how to stage particular events and exploring the possibilities for service inside and outside of school. There will be separate workshop tracks for

teachers, parents and students.

Held on a Sunday afternoon at Nichols, we will bring together all manner of experts to present workshops and to showcase the opportunities to make differences.

Additionally at the Showcase SLTP will award students for their participation in community service and personal development. For information on these awards visit our website.

So mark your calendar now – reserve the date. Bring your friends for a spectacular spring afternoon. It's **Sunday, April 3.**

A Registration form can be found on page 6.

Tech time with Adam by Adam Travis, SLTP Conference

Protecting your computer from Online Threats, part 2 – Spam/Spyware.

Unfortunately, having antivirus software does not protect you from spam and spyware. Spam in itself is just a nuisance, and will not harm your computer, unless you open a message that contains a virus or something else that may harm your computer. Still, it is inconvenient and can become overwhelming. The good news is that many Internet Service Providers (ISPs) have free spam filters, though their effectiveness varies. If you really hate spam, you may want to buy some software to protect yourself. Check out this article from PC World for more information: <http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,115885,00.asp>

The good news is that Anti-Spyware programs are getting better, and the best ones are free. In PC World tests, Lavasoft's Ad-aware 6 Plus and Spybot Search and Destroy performed best. Ad-aware is better at finding the adware variety, and Spybot is better at finding and removing the spyware type of threats. The bad news is that these programs are only about 57% effective, and none of the other products tested were even close to being that good. Some products were found to be almost completely ineffective, despite their cost. The free version of Ad-aware is not as good as the one you pay for; both can be found at <http://www.lavasoft.com/>. My personal favorite is Spybot, which can be

downloaded from <http://www.safer-networking.org/>. For more information, see <http://www.pcworld.com/reviews/article/0,aid,115939,00.asp>

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Just say NO

In this age of materialism, parents' failure to say no can have a negative affect on kids' values, such as hard work, honesty, compassion, responsibility, and self-sufficiency. In "The Power of No"

(Newsweek, www.newsweek.com), Peg Tyre, Julie Scelfo, and Barbara Kantrowitz offer tips from the experts on

how your family can offset the wave of materialism with values.

Are you giving too much?

Evaluate your family's happiness. If it's based on material possessions, don't give in to all your teenager's buying requests.

Where do you draw the line? Have a family meeting that establishes limits and

the reasons for them. Sticking to spending limits are easier when everyone knows what they are.

Does saying no have a negative effect? A teenager's demands are a way to connect with parents—saying no conveys that you're listening just as much as saying yes does!

Portfolios = Scholarships

Personal Professional Portfolio Overview

At the core of the SLTP experience is the integration of learning with personal and professional development. It is possible to view the experience of SLTP as a set of training sessions, skills to learn, lessons to present and experiences to share. As you can see, when we write that perception it seems shallow and incomplete because it is. Purposeful learning is our goal. Purposeful learning requires connecting and relating your specific learnings and understanding gleaned through your SLTP experience to life's lessons acquired in the college classroom, in your co-curricular activities, through

your service experiences, through your part time job or through other your volunteer work.

A Personal Professional Portfolio is designed to be systematic, intentional, visible and creditable. It should enhance your professional image for job applications, college applications, scholarships and interviews. That however is truly only a by-product of its primary function.

Creating a Personal Professional Portfolio will involve writing about ALL of your learning experiences as they relate to the important dimensions and skills that professionals possess. As you assemble a collection of your best work, you will naturally and systematically be reflecting on those experiences thereby

increasing your learning and understandings.

Your task is to assemble a valuable set of credentials, a paper trail of reference that showcases your talents, accomplishments and personal strengths.

Dimensions and Skills

In creating your Personal Professional Portfolio, you will be documenting your acquisition of knowledge, skills and expertise in six Dimensions and six Skills that are essential to a true professional.

Dimensions

Career Exploration
Intercultural Perspectives

Leadership / Initiative
Responsibility / Citizenship
Values and Ethics
Teamwork and Teambuilding

Skills

Analytical Ability
Cooperative Learning & Collaboration
Interpersonal Skills
Oral communication
Written Communication
Information / Computer Literacy

Nuts and Bolts—Putting it all together

1. Buy the book AND a box

Purchase a quality 3 ring binder now, it will serve as a reminder. The box will be for storage of the “stuff”.

2. Divide and conquer

Use tabbed dividers to organize and separate the contents of your portfolio.

3. Use this list as a starting point for ideas of information and items to include in your portfolio:

Table of contents
Statement of purpose
Resume – full
References
Letters of Recommendation
Transcripts (if required)

Personal statement (educational philosophy; business philosophy – depending on aims

Personal Goals
Leadership / Management theory
Samples / evidence

Photos of relevant experience
Successes / failures / results

4. Tips

Keep it simple. Don't overload the portfolio with page after page of lengthy text or repetitive photos.

Keep it manageable. That means easy to hold and peruse.

Keep it timely. Keep it current and up to date.

Include pictures. Not too many and not too few – just right.

Make copies. Use copies in your

Portfolios make a difference!

portfolio. For the picture pages, make copies on a color copier. Keep the originals on file.

Make it clear. Use clear plastic inserts to keep your pages neat and clean.

Keep it reader friendly. Use 12 point type for readability.

5. Work your plan

6. Learn from the experience

