



CHALLENGE



May 2006

A Herff Jones IMPACT Resource for Students

Passing the Torch

As your year as a student leader draws to a close, it's important to think about how you will move on to the next stage of your leadership experience. Whether you are moving to a new level of school or just advancing a grade at your current school, next year will bring new challenges and new roles for you. Give some thought to how you want to finish this year, and what you will do to pass the torch to those who come behind you so that all your work and accomplishments this year won't disappear.

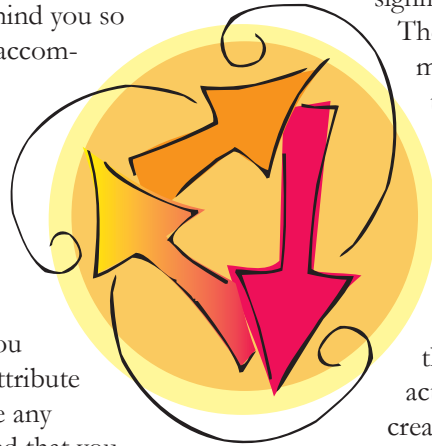
If I had it to do

over... For your own growth as a leader, take stock of what you've done this year. What successes have you had? To what do you attribute your success? Are there any lessons you have learned that you can apply to future situations? Similarly, there were bound to be a few mistakes along the way; what can you learn from those mistakes for the future?

Once you've assessed your leadership year, what words of wisdom would you like to pass on to the person who will succeed you in your organization? If you are an officer or a committee chair, consider writing a letter or report to the new officer or chair detailing things you wish you had known when you started the year.

Also, be sure your files on projects undertaken throughout the year are up-to-date with copies of paperwork, purchase orders, sample programs, evaluations, etc.

Wrap up and inspire. It's important to have some kind of special wrap-up to bring closure to the year and send your group members off with a feeling that they were a part of something significant.



There are many ways to accomplish this, including:

- **Flashback.** Gather photos of the group's activities and create a digital slide show with music to showcase all the events of the year. Highlight each month of the year and be sure to include photos of every member. Show it at one of the final meetings or at a special banquet to allow members to reflect on how much they have done and how much fun they've had being a part of your organization.
- **Special awards.** Create some special awards that will be voted on by the membership. These could be funny awards that draw on events of the year or they could be of the more traditional sort such as "Most Valuable Member," "Most Likely to Succeed," and so forth.

Another idea is to get the officer team together to give awards to each member that highlight the particular accomplishments or characteristics of each member, such as the "Energizer Bunny" for the member who always is ready to go.

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- **Children's story.** Select a children's story that summarizes the year you've had and read it to the members, then give each one a little token to help them remember the lesson or moral of the story. For example, for a group that just kept believing in themselves and what they could accomplish, even though others might have been nay sayers, read *The Carrot Seed* and give people carrot shaped bags of jelly beans.

- **Symbolic "gifts."** Organize the outgoing members of the group to give symbolic gifts to those who will be in the group next year. To do this, each person should choose a physical object that represents something he or she believes the group will need the following year. For example, a watch to represent a need to get places on time, a calendar planner to keep track of all the obligations student leaders have, or a pillow because that's where

dreams are kept and you have to have dreams to succeed. These can be funny or serious, but should be from each departing member. This has a dual purpose of giving each member a moment in the spotlight, and lets new and returning members see the importance the group has had to these members.

Pass the torch. Work with your adviser to organize some sort of official “passing of the torch” to the new officers and members. Whether it’s done at a meeting of the organization or at a special event such as a banquet or reception, the old leadership of your organization should hand off the leadership responsibility with an installation of the new leadership. (See sidebar.)

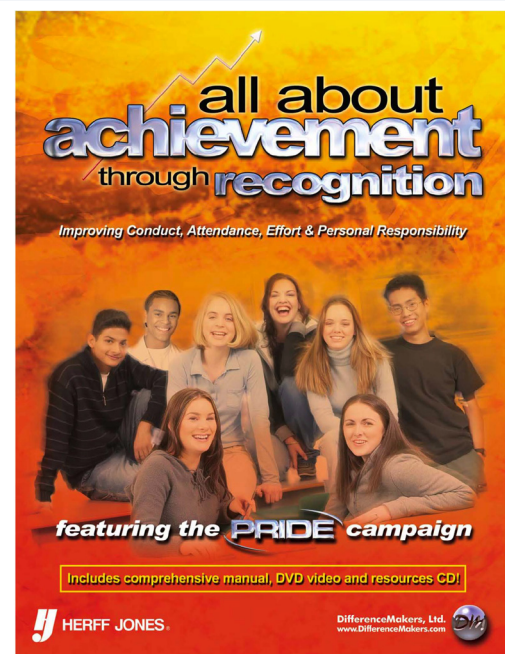
Finish on a positive note. Be sure to thank those who have mentored you or helped you accomplish your goals. Certainly your adviser is deserving of thanks for his or her dedication to your organization. Perhaps you could organize a group gift from the membership. At the very least, a handwritten thank-you note from you is in order; be sure to mention a few specific things you have appreciated. Think of others in your school who should be similarly thanked—a principal, coach, counselor, teacher, or other members.

Take the time to wrap up this year properly and then move on to your next leadership experience with confidence, knowing that you leave behind fond memories and successors who are well equipped to continue the job you started.

Planning an Installation Ceremony

The following checklist of items will help you get started on planning a memorable installation of new officers and members.

- Establish a committee.
- Set a date for the ceremony and secure it on the school calendar.
- Be sure all current and new members reserve the date on their calendars.
- Select a theme.
- Plan the order of the program; give some thought to special touches and awards.
- Obtain a speaker.
- Plan decorations around the theme.
- Order decorations, tablecloths, flowers, etc.
- Select appropriate music for a procession of officers, if desired.
- Invite dignitaries such as the principal or other honored guests and parents.
- Find or create an installation pledge or oath of office.
- Create a printed program as a keepsake.
- Make necessary custodial arrangements.
- Make arrangements for food and drinks, if desired. Consider a caterer or perhaps have members each bring a dish.
- Organize a set-up crew.
- Organize a clean-up crew.
- Evaluate the event and file a report for next year’s committee.
- Send thank-you notes to those who helped.



Today, recognition is a “must do.” Doing it right, doing it often, and doing it for everyone in the learning community leads to improved academic achievement for the entire school. See your local Herff Jones Professional for more information.