

NCYD

NATIONAL SECONDARY STUDENTS COUNCIL

LEADERSHIP TRAINING MANUAL

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Forward

This handbook is intended to act as a guide for Youth Empowerment Officers in carrying out their duties as they seek to empower and build the capacities of student leaders so that student councillors will effectively perform their roles and duties. This handbook will systematically highlight areas in which student councillors ought to be trained as well as place emphasis on how student councillors ought to deal with student matters.

This handbook is intended to be used not supplementary to the Draft NSSC Handbook but complimentary to. This is so as this is a concise version of the NSSC handbook with added information.



Expected Outcome

It is expected that at the end of the training workshop, student councilors would:

1. Have knowledge of the history of the National Secondary Students Council.
2. Have knowledge of who is a student councilor.
3. Have an increased awareness of their roles and responsibilities as a student leader.
4. Have knowledge of the skills and attitude needed to effectively advocate on behalf of their peers.
5. Have knowledge of the process of effective communication.
(see power point on Communication)
6. Have knowledge of negotiation and the ability to apply skills in negotiation.



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SECTION I



INTRODUCTION

Student councils give students a voice and the opportunity to work in partnership with the school administration and staff to improve their schools.

A student councillor is responsible for advocating for students' rights, elevating the standards of student life and upholding the ideas of the National Secondary Students' Council while highlighting students' responsibilities. A student councillor is an important representative as he or she represents the students of each school without whom the students are rendered defenseless against any injustice that they may face.

These persons are responsible for serving, leading, guiding and advocating on behalf of Jamaican students and as such are largely facilitators to an end or mediators in a process. The educating of students is vital as students are still unaware of the fact that there are set laws that govern how students are to be treated and that they play an important role in the decision making process.



BACKGROUND NSSC

The National Secondary Students' Council was established in 1975, through a policy brought before government in 1973. This policy came as a response to the growing demand for effective student representation and the need for students' involvement in the decision making process of schools at the all levels. As student advocacy saw tremendous growth in Jamaica in the 1970's, student governance received legitimacy through the Education Act of 1980.

The Education Act of 1980 stated that *“every public education institution shall have a students' council, which shall consist of elected representatives of students with at least one staff advisor, elected by students.”*

It also outlined that *“through the student councils at the secondary and tertiary levels the student shall have the right to –*

- *Democratically elect their representatives;*
- *Have representation on the board of the institution;*
- *Meet with the principal, and staff or both, on any matter affecting the students' interest*



The National Youth Policy articulates the roles and responsibilities of youth in their personal and national development and serves as a tool for advocating positive youth development. A goal of the National Youth Policy is...

The right to have their voice heard on issues which affect them

The National Secondary Students' Council has evolved over the years to become an institution that advocates strongly on behalf of students of Jamaican secondary schools. The programme was revamped in 2003 under the leadership of the Director of the National Centre for Youth Development and currently represents 162 secondary schools and over 300,000 students.

The NSSC continues its representation of Jamaica's students with the guiding philosophy, "*responsible students make the difference*".



VISION

A dynamic core of responsible and well trained students, recognized at all levels of society, empowered and committed to nation building through exemplary leadership and service

MISSION

To advocate for the rights and welfare of secondary level students while highlighting their responsibilities; thus creating motivated and empowered students, demonstrating positive values and attitudes thereby contributing to the development of the Jamaican society.



Aims and Objectives of the NSSC

1. To identify, advance and promote the interest of Students.
2. To express the viewpoint of Jamaica's Secondary School Students, and represent or arrange the representation of any student or group of students before any authority.
3. To support students, affiliated student organizations and other appropriate bodies at the Local, National, Regional and International levels.
4. To provide students with services and information relevant to their secondary education.
5. To promote the active participation of students in matters affecting their interests, by making representations to the powers that be.
6. To promote student governance, youth leadership, and the participation of youth in the decision-making process of civil society.
7. To develop in students a greater interest in civic, economic, commercial, industrial and cultural affairs.

SECTION II



WHAT IS A STUDENT'S COUNCIL?

A Students' Council is a representative structure, comprising of students who have been democratically elected by their class to advocate on their behalf, thus working in partnership with the school administration, teachers, parents and all other stakeholders to ensure the development and sustenance of a supportive learning environment.

The mandate of Student Councils goes beyond that of any other youth organization: it is the student's voice and ears in all matters related to the operation of his/her institution of learning. Student Council is an avenue through which students can make administrators aware of the issues facing the students in the schools. The Council represents a medium for addressing issues as well as for student participation in the education system.



WHY HAVE A STUDENT'S COUNCIL?

Student councils provide students with an opportunity to be actively involved in the affairs of the school. Ultimately, this is of benefit to the entire school.

Student councillors across Jamaica identified the following advantages to having a student council in their Schools:

- ❖ Assists in creating a positive school environment
- ❖ Allows for the inclusiveness of student views for ensuring the highest standards of education
- ❖ Provides an avenue for student participation
- ❖ Useful in acting as mediators when issues arise between students and the school administration
- ❖ Provides an avenue for the development of the leadership potential of students
- ❖ Affords students the opportunity to receive training in a number of areas e.g. advocacy, public speaking, conflict resolution, which will ultimately benefit the school community
- ❖ Provides an opportunity to unite the student body
- ❖ Provides an opportunity to strengthen the basic elements of democracy among young people



- ❖ Advocate for the creation of a learning environment that is supportive of students”
- ❖ Ensure that all students are treated equally and consistent with the provisions of the Education Act (1980).
- ❖ Present the views of students who feel they have been unfairly treated to the school and act as mediators between the parties.
- ❖ Keep students informed of happenings at the institution and ensure their views are considered before decisions on major issues are taken.



ROLE OF STUDENT COUNCILS...

- ❖ Listening to students
- ❖ Representing students' views
- ❖ A consultative body- Students should be consulted prior to implementation of new school policies.
- ❖ Providers of information
- ❖ Peer support
- ❖ An educational opportunity - Students can learn to think critically through involvement with the student council.
- ❖ Improving school atmosphere
- ❖ Improving school facilities
- ❖ Improving the learning environment
- ❖ Raising students' awareness of 'bigger' issues



THE STUDENT COUNCILLOR....

A student councillor is an individual who has been democratically elected by students to represent and advocate for the acknowledgement and respect of their rights. However, while doing so, must enforce discipline and good conduct at all times.

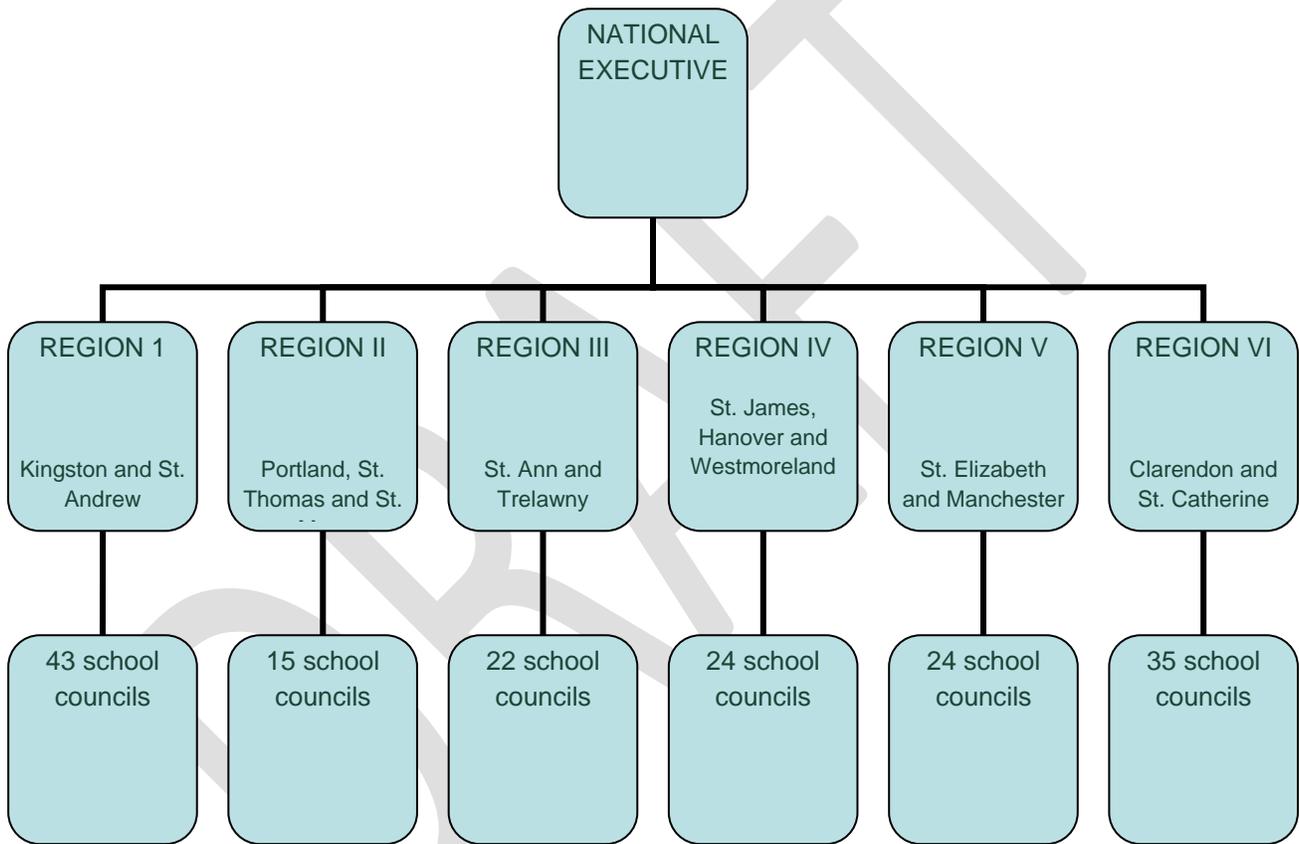
Roles and Responsibilities of the Student Councillor

- ❖ The student councillor is responsible for representing matters of the membership of his/her class to the Students Council, School boards and committees.
- ❖ The student councillor must communicate all instructions and decisions made within the Council to its members
- ❖ The student councillor advocates on behalf of the members of his/her class
- ❖ The student councillor sensitizes his/her fellow students of their rights and responsibilities
- ❖ The student council can mediate in student matters prior to disciplinary actions by the school administration
- ❖ The student councillor must elevate the morals and values of the student population through development programmes

SECTION III



LEADERSHIP – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES





LOCAL COUNCIL

The Local Council which is that individual Student Council existing and operating in any particular school. Representation to Local Council is based on democratic election of class representatives.

Roles and Responsibilities

As outlined through the aims and objectives of the NSSC, student councillors are expected to:

- ❖ Advocate for the acknowledgement and respect of student rights
- ❖ Provide representation for students on any matter affecting them
- ❖ Identify, advance and promote the interest of students.
- ❖ Provide students with services and information relevant to their secondary education.
- ❖ Promote student governance, youth leadership, and the participation of youth in the decision-making process of civil society.



School Student Council Executive (Local Council)

- ❖ President
- ❖ Vice President
- ❖ Treasurer
- ❖ Public Relations Officer
- ❖ Secretary



ROLES & FUNCTIONS OF EXECUTIVE

PRESIDENT

The School Student Council President ...

- ✓ Shall insist on and maintain all aspects of the NSSC Constitution
- ✓ Shall organize, chair, and maintain order in all meetings of the school council
- ✓ Must represent the students on the school board
- ✓ Shall also be a disciplinarian and not just an advocate of student's rights
- ✓ Should be responsible for ensuring that the directives of the Council are properly enacted
- ✓ Should liaise with groups and organizations to promote the interests and welfare of students
- ✓ Should represent the interests of any student or students to any authority
- ✓ Should represent the School Council at each monthly meeting of the Regional Body
- ✓ Must be an exemplary figure at all levels of the NSSC and by extension the wider society



1. VICE PRESIDENT

The School Student Council Vice President ...

- ✓ In the absence of the President must assume the responsibility in the capacity of the President
- ✓ Preside at meetings in the absence of the President.
- ✓ In the event where the President relinquishes office for whatever reason, the Vice President becomes his successor and should assume the role of the President.
- ✓ Should initiate special projects such as, outreach programmes, school projects etc.
- ✓ liaise with groups and organizations to promote the interests and welfare of students



2. TREASURER

The School Student Council Treasurer ...

- ✓ MUST keep an account of all receipts and expenditures of the Council and ensure that such records are a true and fair record of the financial transactions that have taken place in the year
- ✓ prepare and submit to the Council a statement of the financial position of the Council
- ✓ Chair and co-ordinate all fundraising committees for the council
- ✓ Record and report on the council's fundraising activities
- ✓ Place all funds in a reputable Commercial Bank or the school's account within twenty-four hours of receipt.



3. SECRETARY

The School Student Council Secretary...

- ✓ Should select and prepare the meeting place
- ✓ Should ensure that all Councillors are properly notified of meeting times and places
- ✓ Should prepare agendas for meetings at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to meetings
- ✓ Must be present at all meetings to record minutes from the meetings and present that which was recorded from the previous meeting.
- ✓ Should ensure that the records of the Council are properly maintained
- ✓ Must keep up to date record of the attendance and membership of the council
- ✓ Must be in receipt of adequate notice of resignations
- ✓ Is responsible for the councils communications i.e. letters, e-mails, phone calls etc



4. PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER (P.R.O)

The School Student Council P.R.O. ...

- ✓ Is responsible for publicising all the council's activities.
- ✓ Should assist the President and other Officers in the preparation of Press Releases and Statements being put out by the Council
- ✓ Should constantly monitor and keep abreast of all issues of national importance, particularly those that may require a response from the council
- ✓ Should arrange for proper media coverage where necessary, of all activities and events of the Council
- ✓ Assist with all fundraising activities of the Council
- ✓ Should, along with the Secretary, inform the student body of all NSSC functions



TOPICS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING

ADVOCACY & YOUTH RIGHTS

(see also power point on Youth Rights)

Advocacy

An advocate is a person who presents a case or cause to gain support for the cause and to change the belief and actions of the public or the particular group of people that he or she targets. They accomplish this by pleading for, defending or recommending ideas before people.

An effective advocate must:

- ✓ He must know what he wants to accomplish and how his team will contribute.
- ✓ Must keep abreast with current affairs.
- ✓ Be able to identify problems.
- ✓ Must be decisive.

Above all a good advocate must practice good values. People expect advocates to be role models for these values are critical for team success.



As student council representatives, one will be faced with matters that will require him/her to investigate the situation and also review matters where an investigation is not required. In a situation where the matter at hand does not require an investigation, the councilor should:

1. Directly contact the party with whom there is a problem, and try to solve it diplomatically.
2. If the problem persists, it should be brought to the principal's attention. This can be done by the student, through the student council.
3. If the board fails to resolve the matter it should be brought to the National Secondary Student Council Regional Executive.
4. If the Regional Executive fails, then the matter should be brought to the National Executive of the NSSC.
5. If it is not settled at this level, it should be brought to the attention of the school board through the student council executive.
6. If the national executive of the NSSC fails to resolve the matter, it should be brought to the attention of the Youth Empowerment Officer or to the attention of the National Center of Youth Development.



Youth Rights and Responsibilities

All Jamaican youth have the right to:

- ❖ Life
 - ❖ Freedom from discrimination
 - ❖ An identity, name and nationality
 - ❖ Freedom of expression, culture and religion
 - ❖ Basic healthcare and education
 - ❖ Protection from abuse – physical and psychological
 - ❖ Participate in decision making that affects their wellbeing
 - ❖ Opportunities to optimize their growth and development
 - ❖ Access to services and information that will enhance their development
- ✓ Living Environments
 - ✓ Education and Training
 - ✓ Employment and Entrepreneurship
 - ✓ Health
 - ✓ Participation and Empowerment
 - ✓ Care and Protection



All Jamaican youth have the responsibility to:

- ❖ Take ownership of their future and decision making that affects their well-being
- ❖ Take advantage of opportunities to develop and contribute
- ❖ Acquire the best education possible
- ❖ Respect themselves, others and the environment
- ❖ Be good citizens and contribute to social and economic development
- ❖ Care for, support and protect those less well off
- ❖ Advocate for their development



PUBLIC SPEAKING AND COMMUNICATION

At all times students should be kept informed of the activities of the student council. They should also be able to give their views to the council on issues being discussed and should be able to put issues on the agenda for discussion.

Student Council → Students

- ✓ Having a student council suggestions box
- ✓ Announcing upcoming events at assembly/roll call.
- ✓ Keeping a notice board in the school where information on student council activities is posted.
- ✓ Hold regular class meetings so that students can give feed back as well as share ideas and concerns as well as to discuss issues.
- ✓ Conduct surveys on issues affecting students



Student Council → Administration

Student council – administration (student-teacher) relationship can be achieved through the following:

1. Weekly meetings with the Principal, along with Staff Advisor to inform him or her of the Student Council's plan of activities for that week and seek the necessary permission.
2. Arranging with the principal for permission to be included on the agenda to make a presentation to teachers at staff meetings.
3. Providing regular updates to the school board, Principal, staff and parents' association on the student council's activities and plans.
4. Providing an end of year report to the school board.
5. A student representative on the school board.
9. Placing student issues on the agenda for school board meetings.
10. Attendance of representatives from the student council at school board meetings.

PEER COUNSELING



Peer counseling provide students with opportunity to talk and be listened to. It can sometimes be hard to talk to friends and family about certain issues, about anything they are worried about or troubled by.

DRAFT