Effective meetings are the key to the success of any organization. Possibly the most important factor in considering the effectiveness of the meeting is the **PLANNING**. The SCC chairperson should understand the items on the agenda and know effective meeting procedures. The meeting should be announced in advance, publicized, and advertised. Members should know the time, date, location, and agenda of the meeting. The following steps will assist leaders who are planning a meeting. They are from “Eight Steps to More Effective Meetings,” an article in *Leadership* (October 1997, p. 23), a publication of the National Association of Secondary School Principals’ Department of Student Activities.

**Define the purpose of the meeting.** The purpose of a meeting should be clear and acceptable to all participants, and should be to work towards a goal or desired outcomes. If there is no reason for a meeting, then the meeting should be cancelled.

**Plan the agenda.** Once the desired outcomes or meeting objectives are determined, write an outline of the items to be handled during the meeting in order to meet the desired outcomes, and list them in the order in which they are to be addressed. Determine how much time will be spent on each item, what method will be used for each item (large group discussion, brainstorming, work groups, etc.), and who will be responsible for that portion. The agenda should have been discussed and decided upon by the Chair with input from the SCC members. Future agendas and minutes should be printed right after the meeting and handed out or e-mailed to all the attending members, plus posted on the school’s web site and in conspicuous areas. Guest speakers or outside instructors should be informed well in advance with written instructions.

**Consider your time limit.** Meeting times will vary greatly. Plan your agenda so that everything can be handled within the time allowed.

**Plan for the people who will be involved.** “Consider who will be present at the meeting. Are they familiar with the business at hand? If not, how can you bring them up to speed? How motivated will they be to participate? Who will be leading the activities? Answering these questions will help determine the activities of the meeting.” *(Leadership Magazine, October 1997, p. 23).*

**Schedule the meeting in an appropriate setting.** The location of the meeting should be conducive for the purpose of the meeting. There should be an adequate number of chairs, placed correctly according to the size of the group and the function of the meeting. Temperature, lighting, and noise should all be taken into consideration.
**Follow your plan.** Meetings should start on time. Punctuality is the sign of an organized group. The agenda that was prepared before the meeting should be followed. The chairperson should work through the agenda, in order, being careful to stick to time limits and avoid getting off track. However, the chairperson should be flexible enough to adjust the plan if necessary. The chairperson should be able to discern the best type of procedure(s) to be used by the group – Interaction Method (Facilitative Leadership), parliamentary procedure (the larger the group, the more parliamentary procedure would need to be used), and/or a combination of both.

The focus of the meeting should be upon real differences, not technicalities; arguments should be avoided if they are only for the sake of arguing. It is the job of the chairperson to draw shy people out and to hear everyone’s opinion. Debate should be limited to concise statements and not lengthy orations which have little or nothing to do with the question at hand. The chairperson should not dominate the discussions or allow another person in the group to do so. The chairperson should get all the opinions, both pro and con, out into the open and work towards consensus, because the group as a whole can see farther than one individual. The problem-solving process should be used to its fullest capacity. Brainstorming, work groups, and positive debate all help a group make intelligent decisions. Most of all, meetings should be interesting, exciting, and fun. The average person has an attention span of 23 minutes or less. Keep the meeting moving.

**Review decisions made.** At the end of the meeting, all the agreements made, such as tasks assigned, chairs appointed, and committees formed, should be verified.

**Evaluate the meeting and follow-up.** At the end of the meeting, review the desired outcomes and evaluate how successful the meeting was. What went well and what could be improved? When the meeting is over, it does not mean that the job is finished. Clean-up is in order, and it should be extremely efficient. The minutes of the meeting need to be reviewed with the secretary. The minutes and any information which was reported in the meeting must get out to the people who need to be informed as soon as possible. Follow-up on the people who volunteered to do jobs must also be done to ensure that they are getting the job done. Thank yous to speakers and presenters and people who contributed refreshments or the like should also be sent as soon as possible.