

Topic: Advisory Committee

Advisor: Jay Walker

School: Robinson Secondary School, Virginia

Jay Walker notes that “from day one of teacher training . . . advisors are preached to about the importance of maintaining an advisory committee. Many school systems have committees made up of prominent business leaders who advise marketing/DECA programs. Special or short term committees can also help with projects or events your students wish to undertake.”

Walker notes that reasons for contacting business professionals include soliciting donations or industry updates, getting classroom speakers or seeking guidance for a DECA project. “I am a firm believer that you need the support of community/business leaders for the students’ professional growth. These committees are usually formed and activated to meet just 2_3 times while you are working on a project.

“An advisory committee will enhance student projects and focus students on a topic that is functional (without you having to do all of the work). The adults are always amazed that kids can undertake such detail-oriented projects. They end up feeling ownership in the education of your young DECA marketers.

“Once you have a project topic, write a proposal and gather your old projects (or purchase 1997 winners from DECA

IMAGES). Then make a pitch asking a potential advisory committee member to serve. Make the commitment time 1–2 hours for the first meeting and have your students give an organized and rehearsed presentation. I suggest no more than five advisory members with diverse backgrounds.

“For three consecutive years our chapter projects have made it to the stage at nationals with the partnership of an advisory committee. The committee played a huge role and produced a sense of urgency in the students. This past year’s project utilized a retired army public affairs officer, a media producer, a legislative lobbyist, a public affairs associate and a director of community affairs. They provided guidance, goal setting, funding, media contacts, classroom speakers, editing assistance and promotional material. They also found funds to help the students with transportation costs to nationals.

“The advisory committee gives credibility to your project, promotes your chapter in the community and provides a valuable testimony to your administration. If you are committed to your students and have clear and defined goals for your DECA chapter, please consider organizing a group of adults who might just be frustrated teachers!”