



# Beware of Gnostics with Nostrums



### CSLA MEMBERSHIP 2013

A membership in CSLA is a statement that you are supporting a recognized program for student leaders in your school. Your membership gives you discounts, but most importantly, it gives you a real connection to the vibrant network of student leadership advisors across the country.

As a school member, your students can apply for one of the national CSLA scholarships, or they can join the Tall Ship Training on board HMCS Oriole in the spring, and they can attend the Canadian Student Leadership Conference in the fall. As an advisor, you can participate in the teacher certification process, receive monthly e-bulletins and get deals on leadership resources and supplies.

Visit our website: [studentleadership.ca](http://studentleadership.ca) for more details and resources.

Education and medicine share the same basic core necessity in our world. We need both areas to be vibrant and forward looking for our society to remain and grow healthy. However, every month in medicine there is a new miracle product from Dr. Oz or some other less accredited charlatan that will shed pounds or protect you from imminent and/or lingering death. Thousands flock to the cure because we hope and believe this nostrum will make our present lives better. These experts present themselves as gnostics but are no better than snake oil salesmen peddling cures for the gullible and desperate.

Gnostics claim to have superior knowledge than the rest of us, and Education has its share of instructional mountebanks. These are the experts who slide into town with new educational programs that they have never used in a classroom themselves, but will improve test scores, cure unsightly warts and enhance overall educational acuity. Please understand: These people are paid to sell their product *not* to instruct your students. They conduct sessions like the financial seminars run by the fancy suits who have never used the investing formulas they promote to accumulate the riches they now have.

Bullying will always be with us in schools and students will still choose to fail no matter what program or expert training you bring in. Education can get better for all, but it takes a concentrated effort of time and cooperation with students, admin, staff and the parent community. You *can* change human behaviour but you cannot change human nature, so there is no speaker or program who will cure all the bullies and help the victims pass all their courses. It takes the work and attention of educators such as yourself to make a real difference in your school.

For over 25 years, CSLA has provided a healthy and respected network of support for teachers and schools to rely on. Your membership allows you to connect with advisors in the classroom doing positive things with their students and school communities. A CSLA membership is the necessary medicine that your school can use to stay robust and active.

*“Leadership, like swimming, cannot be learned by reading about it.”*

*Henry Mintzberg*

## Taking your Plan Global

Where does change begin? For the winners of Plan Canada’s *Plan for Change* contest it started local and became global with a trip to Ghana to see development work in action. These two young ladies, Miranda and Adiba pictured to the right, took that trip and made a real difference.



The P4C contest is part of Plan Canada’s youth program, also known as PlanYouth. Any [planyouth.ca](http://planyouth.ca) user aged 14-22 can create a Plan for Change (P4C) on the site and then track progress toward their goal to take action for a global cause by posting photos, blog updates and videos. Once a P4C is completed, that person becomes eligible to win a trip to a country in Africa to visit some of Plan’s projects.

When the P4C contest launched, these two grade 11 girls were already making a difference in their communities as volunteer youth ambassadors with Plan’s “Because I am a Girlz’ initiative. They based their P4Cs on the activities they were already involved in and then took things one step further by thinking big and setting a goal for a year that tied everything together. They organized groups and events, brought guest speakers to their schools and delivered workshops and presentations to help raise awareness about youth leadership and human rights.

While Miranda and Adiba were in Ghana, they visited four different communities where Plan works. Here is how one of the girls described their visit to a school:

“The differences between the old school building and the new facilities are like night and day. One of the most ingenious aspects of the school is that there is a water pump built inside just for the students. Many girls have to spend hours walking to get water and then bring it home. A school with an easily accessible, built-in water pump would give parents an incentive to send their daughters to school where they can learn, collect the water they need, and then bring home knowledge for their future and a basic necessity for their present day.”

This might sound very different from the schools most Canadians are used to, but in fact what really made an impact on Miranda and Adiba was how many similarities they discovered when they spent time with their Ghanaian peers. In the blog she wrote for *The Huffington Post* after returning from the trip Adiba wrote, “Ghana is no longer that faraway place that you might hear about on TV. It’s a country full of youth just like us who can transform their community if they have the right tools to do so.”

That’s what the Plan for Change program is all about - making those local-global connections that help us realize the incredible impact we can each have. By creating a Plan for Change and turning your ideas into action, you’re helping to create a better world, one step at a time. Your actions, big or small, have the potential to change the lives for youth just like you all around the world. Check out the website [planyouth.ca](http://planyouth.ca) and create your Plan for Change today!

### RELIABILITY IS LITTLE STUFF

People like to be called “reliable” because they think that this means that they are trusted, which is a good thing. However, 95% of your reliability will be judged on the little stuff that makes up everyday life. For example, being on time to pick up a friend, returning a borrowed item, calling back when promised, or answering texts all add up to being reliable. Only 5% of your perceived reliability will be based on life’s “big things” such as completing a major project or planning an event. If we can’t count on you to be on time for work, remember to get a receipt, or return my call to go out one night, why would I think you are “reliable” for anything “bigger”? Take the little things seriously because they add up, and they mean everything to those around you!

*Andy Thibodeau*

# Many Hands do Help

Many times we try to accomplish tasks by ourselves instead of working together. Most jobs would be completed faster, easier and with less effort if we cooperated with each other. There are times when we need to compete and times when we need to work together. Knowing when to compete and when to cooperate will help all of us succeed.

**Focus:** Cooperation, Working Together

**Supplies:** a jar of peanut butter, a jar of jam or jelly, a table knife for each person, two pieces of bread per person. (Ask the group first about peanut allergies)

## Instructions:

Begin by giving each person one piece of bread and a table knife. Explain that their job is to make a peanut butter and jam sandwich. There are two rules. First they are to use only one slice of bread, so the sandwich is really only half of a sandwich. The bread may not just be folded over to make the sandwich. The piece of bread must be cut in half to form the two sides of the sandwich.

Second, they can use only one hand to make the sandwich. The other hand must be kept behind their back at all times. Now have them make the sandwich.



When the initial sandwiches are completed, you are ready for round two. Have everyone find a partner. The partners will now cooperate to make a sandwich. Give each pair a new piece of bread. The challenge is the same: create a peanut butter and jam sandwich. Once again, each person may use only one hand. Give the teams one minute to plan their strategy before starting. During the planning session, they may not touch the sandwich-making materials.

At the completion of the activity, sit back and enjoy a snack of peanut butter and jam sandwiches.

## Processing:

The experience is made much more powerful by the questions and the discussion that follows the creation of the sandwiches:



- What problems did you have when working by yourself? With a partner?
- Which sandwich looked better: the first or second one?
- How does competition affect cooperation?
- Can we be both cooperative and competitive? Explain.

This activity and more are found in the resource, *Activities that Teach Family Values*, by Tom Jackson. It is available from CSLA online at: [casaa.myshopify.com](http://casaa.myshopify.com)

*"Pull the string, and it will follow wherever you wish. Push it, and it will go nowhere at all. "*

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

## WHERE IS IT?

This team-based activity builds cooperation. Define a search area and place a small familiar object within it (keys, paper clip, or earring). Blindfold two or three individuals and have them search the area as a group without losing physical contact with each other.

You can change the activity's sensory skills by placing a cell phone hidden in the area and have it vibrate intermittently. You can also spray cologne or perfume on an object and have the group use their sense of smell (this works well outside).

The size of the search area should be initially fairly small and after the group has perfected their searching techniques, larger areas can be used. This shows that cooperation and trust can be learned and slowly enhanced within the group.

# Democratic Leadership

## Premise

I was concerned, first as a classroom teacher and later as a Student Activity Director, with the lack of formality and respect given to the student election process. Often the individual(s) elected to represent their peers did not possess the leadership qualities or skills necessary to successfully fulfill their responsibilities. This was not so much the fault of the elected individual(s) as of the system which put them into office. The focus of many student elections has been on the final product – the winner – rather than on the process of leadership development and putting forth qualified and sincere candidates. The result has been that a great number of students are placed into significant positions of responsibility based upon popularity rather than skill. Below I will highlight a true case scenario that caused my original concerns to turn into action for change.

## Case

A popular student-athlete was elected to the highest position of office on student council. This individual had never previously shown an interest in student council or its activities. He put forward his name for consideration, then did not run a campaign and delivered an election speech which was only seven words in length:

*If elected I will shave my head.*

Because of this student's popularity, he was able to win the election—yes, he did follow through with his election promise.

During the fall term, it became obvious that both the student council and academics were secondary to this student's interest in athletics. Immediately following the completion of the fall sports schedule, this student left school. This not only created a huge hole on the student council, but fostered a lack of faith and respect in the student council. The student council and activities program took a long time to recover, refocus and regain the respect of the staff and students.



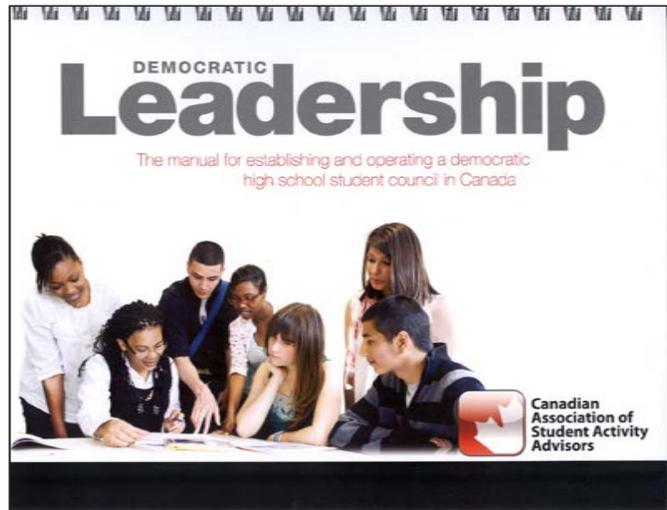
The procedures described in the new resource are not a direct response to the above, but have evolved and been tested to help schools identify qualified candidates and give them the resources necessary to run a stimulating and respected campaign and respected student government. This process is not perfect and will continue to evolve in your school. Do not adopt any election process in its entirety—know what works in your school. If you are able to identify one or two aspects of the process which you feel could make a difference at your school, then this book will have been successful.

*Tim Tonner*

## The Resource Solution

This brand new resource, *Democratic Leadership*, was developed after extensive consultation with students and advisors from across Canada. It is meant to be a resource for anyone who wants to set up a student council at the high school level or make an existing one more effective.

This handbook, available in English and French from CSLA, is divided into eight sections. The first two cover theoretical material – that is, the concept of leadership and the meaning of democracy. The following six sections offer concrete information for the formulation of a successful working council. Worksheets are included to help make the process of student government flow more smoothly.



Each school is unique. While this resource should serve as a guide, it is important to acknowledge that every Student Council will develop its own unique way to meet the specific demands of the student body and the school as a whole. Not every school need follow these instructions precisely. In fact, lively debate around the topics introduced is the mark of a healthy beginning.

We don't elect unpopular people, but student leadership is not just about being popular. It is far more complex than that. True leaders have commitment. They seek consensus. They act as field guides along the road leading to the common good.



Some student leaders don't do a good job because they are not sure of what the real job of leadership is. Some students find themselves in a position of leadership as the result of a dare or an idea that "running an election campaign would be fun." People who stumble into a position of leadership without training are poorly prepared for a serious and responsible approach to leadership.

This resource will help your school to set the reasonable standards and purposes of a student council. A healthy, democratically-elected student council will be an effective way to promote leadership and react to the needs and values of your school community.

This valuable resource is available from CSLA online at: [casaa.myshopify.com](http://casaa.myshopify.com)

*“You should never cut what you can untie.”*

*Joseph Joubert*

## Being Creative is Being Adaptive

Steve Jobs is credited with saying, “Good artists copy. Great artists steal.” What’s interesting about that quote is the reality that Jobs stole it from Pablo Picasso who said, “Art is theft.” Creative geniuses have a long history of taking the best pieces from others and making them their own. Don’t think that Shakespeare came up with the sunny story of Romeo and Juliet all by himself sitting in dreary England.



### Keep it fresh

The key to creativity is to find ideas that are truly worth stealing. It was Mark Twain who said that, “It is better to take what does not belong to you than to leave it lie around neglected.” The world of advertising and popular culture have many rich areas to mine and use to your advantage. The key with popular culture is to use it while it’s still a fresh idea. You can’t run a successful *Survivor* contest and your chance of using a *Hunger Games* theme is waning already. You have to know what is current and use it before it gets too stale. Have your students identify what are the most popular TV shows and ads before they embark on a campaign that relies on the knowledge of these current memes. Also recognize that popular culture will bring back old ideas, but these oldies will last less time than the Bieb’s latest single.

### Keep a file

Great ideas need to be produced at the right time, so when you steal an idea that has not reached its best-before-date but is still not ready to use, keep a swipe file that you can drop it into. Often these ideas will form a great brainstorming collage that will generate new and more creative ready-for-prime-time ideas. Keep separate swipe files in the digital and analog worlds because the tactile sorting of paper will still generate new thoughts.

### Keep it open source

Some of the most powerful creative forces on the Internet come from sharing. Share and network with others to learn what is happening and start the creative ideas flowing. Studentleadership.ca has a Share Shop that has lots of great ideas that have been posted by schools across Canada. Check in and contribute.

### Keep it different

The ultimate rule in creativity is: “Adapt. Don’t adopt.” Adaptation is not plagiarism. When you first consider your talents, your audience and your intended results; you will then be able to make it your own.

*Dave C.*

This article was created with quotes and bits of information from an excellent book by Austin Kleon, entitled: *Steal Like an Artist*

### LEAVE THE STRESS ALONE

Fill a glass half full of water and ask your class, “How heavy is this single glass of water?”

The answer is that the absolute weight doesn’t matter. It depends on how long you hold it. If you hold it for a minute, it’s not a problem. If you hold it for an hour, you’ll have an ache in your arm. If you hold it for a day, your arm will feel numb and paralyzed. In each case, the weight of the glass doesn’t change, but the longer you hold it, the heavier it becomes.

The stresses and worries in life are like that glass of water. Think about them for a while and nothing happens. Think about them a bit longer and they begin to hurt. And if you think about them all day long, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything.”

It’s important to remember to let go of your stresses. As early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don’t carry them through the evening and into the night. Remember to put the glass down!

# The Leadership Retreat

They say there are 4 stages to being a speaker. Some speakers never get past the second stage; the good ones want to make it to the 5th.

- Stage one: You are simply happy to be on stage.
- Stage two: You want to make them laugh. When an audience replies to story with laughter you know they are engaged. Many speakers stop here at this stage thinking that they are doing an amazing job, because there is laughter.
- Stage three: You want to make them listen. The moment that you see an audience member nodding in agreement to a point you have made. They “get” what you’re trying to say. They have bought into your message.
- Stage four: You need to make a difference.

I hit stage 4 early in my career. I was finishing a speech when I thought to myself, what if I could do more than just my speech. What if I could take the best students and work with them for a week? What an amazing impact it could make. That’s when *Youth Leadership Camps Canada* became a very real idea 21 years ago.

We have built a place that student leaders can grow and blossom into exceptional young people. We now run amazing school retreats for student leaders. Schools bring their students’ council, leadership class, grade nines or simply create a leadership camp for any interested students in their school.

The benefits of these retreats are massive. Teachers that work with us have sung the praises of running these programs and retreats. Here’s why: Retreats help foster a very strong bond between their student leaders. The team building opportunities are awesome. I have yet to see a group of students not leave camp without smiles on their faces and a new energy, ready to take on the challenges ahead. Most of our retreats we build in planning time to allow student leaders, uninterrupted, to make a plan for their upcoming year or semester. When students have a goal the journey there is much easier.

My favourite type of retreats are the school leadership camps. These provide the opportunity for any student in the school that has an interest or has been deemed as a possible future leader to buy into the idea of school spirit and student leadership. One school started a retreat 5 years ago and their administration has noted that the entire vibe of the school community has changed.

Sometimes the best leadership training opportunities begin outside the classroom and the school. Ten years ago we worked with less than 10 schools; we now work with over 160 each year. They know it works.

If you have any questions about how to plan a retreat please contact me at: [stu@ylcc.com](mailto:stu@ylcc.com)

In case you wondering about the fifth stage of a speaker? Leave a legacy. Do something that allows you to not just be a series of well rehearsed stories and funny jokes. Do something that puts your words into action. I hope that through YLCC I may have done that.

*Stu Saunders*

Stu is the keynote speaker for the CSLA one-day leadership conferences. Check the website for a date near you or run your own Horizons conference by contacting CSLA.



*“Delegating works, provided the one delegating works too.”*

*Robert Half*

## CATCH THE SPIRIT ON A LINE

Leadership is about involving all the groups in your school, and one group that is often missed are the students who like hunting and fishing. Have you ever thought of starting a fishing club at your school?

Waterloo Collegiate has a fishing club and it involves those who really love the sport and most importantly introduces others who would love to try it but never have had the opportunity or equipment to participate. A lot of new Canadians hook their first fish at a trout farm with this club.

Believe it or not, there is an Ontario High School Fishing series, and you can find out more by looking at the website: [www.educastfishing.ca](http://www.educastfishing.ca)

If there isn’t a fishing derby in your province, now is the time to start one. Now is the time to get those students hooked on a new club!

*“You cannot live a perfect day without doing something for someone who will never be able to repay you.”*

*John Wooden*

### Above and Beyond

is the official newsletter of the Canadian Student Leadership Association. The newsletter is published 3 times a year for schools all across Canada.

To learn more about membership, go to [www.studentleadership.ca/join.html](http://www.studentleadership.ca/join.html)

You can contact us at:

**CSLA Publications**  
268 West Acres Drive  
Guelph, ON N1H 7P1  
Tel: 1 519 222 6718  
Fax: 1 519 821 0035

Canadian Student  
Leadership Association

## Resources

Be sure to visit the CSLA website for more lesson plans, activity ideas and a complete list of resources.  
[studentleadership.ca](http://studentleadership.ca)



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## Run a Girls Night In

Many schools across the country are hosting a *Girls Night In* – these are evenings of girl-talk and activities designed to bring girls together, build community and learn the ins and outs of navigating girl world in a safe environment. Here are some pointers to make your GNI a success!

**Develop A Clear Vision:** Know why and how you are running this night. Is the goal to help girls successfully transition into high school or to raise self-esteem and body image? Do you want to increase sisterhood and kindness or help incoming students get to know each other? Will it be a sleepover?

**Budget:** You need to think about your overall budget for food, guest speakers, equipment, etc. Are there any school funds available? Are there grants that you can apply for?

**Promotion:** In order to get girls interested and excited to attend, you’ve got to build the buzz! Think of ways to promote the night: deliver invites to girls by hand; use social media to tweet about the event leading up to it announcing speakers and activities; create a Facebook events page and invite girls online; use Instagram to give girls a “behind the scenes” look at the planning process and all the fun stuff in store; and offer great door prizes to attendees, possibly donated by local businesses.

**Food:** Ask girls or their parents to bring in healthy snacks and dishes potluck style. Offer a fun decorate-your-own cupcake station for dessert.

**Activities:** Not all girls are interested in manicures and makeovers, and while they may be a fun aspect of a GNI, offering activities that will appeal to a variety of different girls will help ensure a good turnout. For example, maybe you have Zumba, yoga, a DIY activity, a make-your-own smoothie stand, a “high school success 101” workshop etc. Look for students within your school that have a unique talent or ability (dance, art, organization) and have them lead a session or activity.

**Speaker(s):** Having a “main event” is a great way to build buzz and get the girls excited about attending. Whether you invite a guest speaker, local personality, successful community member, or past grad who’s doing cool stuff, choose somebody that fits with your theme and has concrete tips, advice and lessons for the girls.

**Extras:** It’s the little touches that really help make a GNI a success. Will the girls leave with goody bags? What songs will be on the playlist? Will there be fun games designed to help girls get to know each other? Will there be prizes? Get creative and think about what your attendees would love to receive.

Running a GNI can be a really fun way to help girls get to know each other, increase self-esteem, sisterhood and kindness, raise awareness of a certain topic or issue and learn new skills. For a complete list of activities, tips, ideas and more, visit [www.fearlesslygirl.com](http://www.fearlesslygirl.com)

*Kate Whitfield*

