Jami Fenwick

CTSO Advisor Interview Summary

7/1/19

DECA Advisor Summary

In the fall I will be taking over the marketing program at Capital High School in Boise Idaho. My predecessor, Sandy Murin has been a marketing teacher and DECA advisor for thirty years, twenty-two of them at Capital High. I was lucky enough to work with her the past ten years and watch how she ran her program and the wonderful contributions DECA made to our school. When I found out I was taking her position I was able to spend a lot of time in her classroom, travel with thirty students to ICDC national’s competition in Orlando, FL, and spend a lot of time picking Sandy’s brain on everything! While I have been trying to soak up as much as I can I was excited to meet with Sandy and ask her some very direct questions about advising a CTSO.

Sandy and I were able to really drill into the aspects of advising a DECA program. We covered everything from recruiting, allocating class time appropriately, dealing with student drama, developing leadership skills, competition, choosing a leadership council, creating a POA, and other special advice she had for me.

I had never heard Sandy mention a POA before so this became one of my first questions. She told me that DECA calls it a program of work and it isn’t currently mandated. She said she definitely goes through the process each year, but doesn’t have a formal document that contains all of the information. She starts the second week of school and makes this a project for her third year students who are in the class titled Marketing Lab. They break into groups based on topic, brainstorm and then present to the whole class to decide which committees they will officially form. Once broken into committees a leader of the committee is appointed (informal process) and purpose, goals, and action are set into place. Each committee is responsible for organizing and heading up their own area while also helping the other students as needed to meet all organizational goals and initiatives.

I also asked Sandy how she elects her officers, their roles, and any trainings they take part in. She has interested students fill out an application and then she determines who will fill each role based on their answers and their past performance in the classroom. Past performance isn’t based on grades but on work ethic. She doesn’t have the rest of her DECA students elect officers like the text book suggests in hopes it does not create drama and turn into a popularity contest. I really like this and plan to do the same next year. Some years her council will attend BASIC training and other years they don’t, she lets the student group decide.

 Sandy has been doing this job for a long time so I was very curious to find out which aspects of advising a CTSO were the most challenging for her. Her answers were travel and balancing class time spent on CTSO business. I was surprised to hear her say travel because from the outside it appears to be one of her favorite parts of the job. While she does love it, she said the planning can be a lot of extra time and chasing your tail, and that actually traveling with a group of students can be downright stressful. Keeping a tight rein on students and knowing that she is completely liable for their safety is her cause of stress. Sandy combats this by carefully choosing the students who will compete and travel, knows them well, and educates them ahead of time and on the trip so they know protocols and where and when they should be at all times during travel. For example, every day during our trip Sandy did a bed check where she checks in with all groups of students, answers any questions, calms nerves, and finally goes over their schedule for the following day. Having a reliable travel companion who also knows the students and school protocols can be very helpful. While it’s one of the hardest parts of being an advisor it’s also one of the most rewarding!

As for balancing class time, Sandy guesstimates she spends an average of ten minutes a day on DECA. DECA is always a part of the daily class agenda, containing updates or action items. Some days she won’t spend any time on DECA, and other days or weeks it might be the entire class period. For example, when DECA does the Make-A-Wish assembly it takes all students working full class periods to pull it together. Sandy said it can be a tricky balance and suggests planning for it in advance and sectioning out the appropriate class time.

This past year Capital High DECA had 131 members. Since DECA members must be marketing students, Sandy has her third year students help recruit in both first and second year classes at the beginning of the school year. Sandy doesn’t necessarily recruit for DECA but she does recruit for the marketing program at an incoming sophomore night. She has never had a problem getting students to sign up for DECA due to word of mouth. Marketing is a fun class that students enjoy taking and the same goes for DECA. Students hear other students talking about how much fun the trip to Orlando was, or about the Wahooz leadership day and they want to be part of it.

 I am lucky to have Sandy has a resource, and am hopeful she will come back and work with my students from time to time, and become part of our community sponsors. I have so much to learn and am thrilled she is only a phone call away. While I plan to keep the majority of the program the same for at least a year, one of the things I need to change is getting formal documents in place. For example, a POA. The biggest thing I hope to keep the same is Sandy’s relationship with her students. She has made an impact on so many and I hope to do the same.