

SESASC Strengthens Leadership Skills

*By Ryan Kief, Snow Hill High School Senior
and President of the Southern Eastern Shore Association of Student Councils*

The constitution of the Southern Eastern Shore Association of Student Councils (SESASC) defines the organization as “a regional student government with representatives from four lower shore counties that serves to promote leadership and spirit in education and the community.” The definition, however, cannot possibly capture the heart of what SESASC is all about. Ultimately, SESASC enables students to make a difference in the world around them.

SESASC is one of many regional student council organizations in our state. Regional student council organizations are a part of the Maryland Association of Student Councils (MASC) – the state organization of student councils. To add to the acronyms, MASC is part of NASC – the National Association of Student Councils! Student government, therefore, can extend beyond one’s school, expanding into the region, state, and nation.

SESASC is comprised of an executive board which includes four elected officers and six appointed positions. The organization’s general assembly, which meets four times a year, is comprised of students from SESASC-member schools. Each school is allotted a certain number of votes based on their school’s population. Like student government at the school level, SESASC is a student-run organization which follows parliamentary procedure, but what makes the regional level so special is the collaboration that exists between all participating schools on the Southern Eastern Shore – at both the middle and high school levels.

On the executive board of SESASC, I serve as president. The vice president is from Parkside High School and our treasurer is from Pocomoke High School. Schools in Worcester, Wicomico, Somerset, and Dorchester Counties are encouraged to join. SESASC aims to use this regional participation and cooperation in order to provide all students in the region with several valuable leadership opportunities.

The Overnight Leadership Workshop is one opportunity that SESASC takes pride in offering students year after year. This event is created *by* students *for* students. General assembly members decide on the types of workshops they want offered at the Overnight Leadership Workshop (OLW), while the executive board plans out and creates the workshops requested. “It is a really great experience,” says JaMilla Thompson, a sophomore at Snow Hill High School. “I

really liked that SESASC created workshops based on what we – as students – wanted. OLV was great!”

SESASC also has the duty of representing the interests of students in the region at MASC functions, such as MASC’s annual convention. With 1,000 participating Maryland students, SESASC attends the MASC convention as a region. During the convention, SESASC members elect officers and receive leadership training. MASC’s executive board includes the SESASC president, one elected middle school student, and the second vice president. MASC also has several appointed positions such as Chief-of-Staff, a position held by Stephen Decatur High School junior Kara Brower. “I act as head of staff to the appointed positions of the state and plan with the officer team of MASC,” explained Brower.

Student representation, however, expands beyond the inner-workings of the SESASC and MASC organizations. For example, SESASC and MASC strive to be a student voice in the legislative matters affecting students in the state. With functions like the annual Lobbying Day, which was held on February 20 of this year, students are given the opportunity to travel to Annapolis to meet with their State Legislators in order to explain their views on issues. This year, students had discussions with Delegates Norman Conway and Jim Mathias. Snow Hill High School student Daniel Pilchard, a Student Representative to the Worcester County Board of Education, has participated in Lobbying Day several times. “I always enjoy how impressed our Delegates are with us,” said Pilchard. “Our Delegates really respect when young people are concerned and involved.”

With experiences like these, students are afforded the opportunity to make an effective difference as student leaders. If you are a student who wants to have an effect on the world around you, then SESASC is for you! It is an organization comprised of dynamic, unique student leaders; SESASC is truly an amazing organization. If you have any questions about SESASC, you may leave a message for me with my advisor Helen Schoffstall at Snow Hill High School, at 410-632-5270.