

DKG Recruitment/Membership Plan

Chapters throughout the Society are searching for new ways to increase membership. International President Lyn Schmid encourages the use of this new plan that has been used successfully to revitalize struggling chapters, to energize healthy chapters, and to develop new chapters in several state organizations. Schmid's easy to use recruitment plan, now available on the DKG website Membership Committee page, includes complete instructions and all the resources your chapter needs to begin building membership.

During a chapter meeting, members receive prospect cards on which they record the name and contact information of an educator they would like to nominate. Chapter members might nominate an enthusiastic teacher they noticed at a district training session or a talented music teacher they noted directing her school's student musical. A retired teacher could nominate a beloved teacher she learned about from a grandchild or a teacher she noticed while volunteering in a school. A member could record the name of an educator whose outstanding teaching ability she witnessed while receiving instruction at a photography or painting class, a master gardener session, or technology training.

Once the cards are collected and a vote is taken on the prospects, the chapter mails an enthusiastic letter to the prospective members inviting them to an orientation session. Research shows that holding the orientation on a weeknight from 7-8 p.m. is optimal for attendance. During the orientation, the prospects are introduced to the Society via the *Pride in the Big Picture* presentation, featuring specific chapter program and project highlights, benefits of membership, and shared stories of the power of DKG to transform lives. After initiation, the new members may also receive prospect cards to honor someone they know with membership in the Society.

Chapters that are having difficulty adding new members can use this plan to help turn the tide. The newest chapter in Premont, Texas, used the plan to develop a list of new members and other chapters in Texas are growing as a result of its use, as well. Joanne Davis, past Texas State Organization President who is working on chapter development, states, "All chapters should use this approach if they want a professional, new way of offering membership."

Step 1: This plan emphasizes the honor of membership in DKG. The chapter membership committee should request members to submit a name via a prospect card (See sample document, *DKG Prospect Card*) at one or two meetings. They should then compile a list to present to the membership for a vote. These active public and private school teachers and retirees do not have to be contacted before recommendation. (Key to making up this list is to choose those women

whom you really want in your chapter—assume nothing would prevent them from saying yes. Don't eliminate them because you “assume” they would say no. Let them decide for themselves!)

Step 2: Each should be informed in a special, personal letter that she has been chosen for membership in our prestigious society. (See sample document, *Prospect Letter*) Key elements of the letter are that the prospect was recommended by a member (named) based on her stellar qualities as a teacher and approved by the entire chapter. Brief info on DKG and the chapter is included, as well as the invitation to an orientation meeting. The letter emphasizes the honor of membership and asks them to RSVP for the meeting.

Step 3: Some may decline; some may call with questions; and some may agree to come immediately. For each of those who plan to attend, invite an equal number of current members to serve as “buddies” at the orientation.

Step 4: At the orientation, provide social time for current and prospective members and then present the *Pride in the Big Picture* slide show (available for download at www.dkg.org) . Current members can meet with the prospects in small groups to answer any questions. At the conclusion of the meeting (which lasts only one hour), ask them to make a decision to accept or decline the invitation to become members. (Remember, no one has approached these women about joining prior to the letter.)

Step 5: The current member “buddy” can use the Chapter Member Application (See sample document, *Chapter Member Application*) to obtain information about the prospective member. This application serves as the Recommendation for Membership or Form 11 used by many chapters to obtain member information. It can also serve as a commitment from the prospective member.

Step 6: Invite the prospective members to the initiation ceremony with the Initiation Letter (See sample document, *Initiation Letter*). Remember to plan ahead and order all necessary supplies in preparation for the ceremony.

Sherri Wagemann, Washington State Organization and member of the International Membership Committee, commented: "Providing an orientation for prospective new members prior to their initiation is vital. It helps them understand the value of membership and what our organization has to offer. This recruitment plan also offers a natural transition for mentoring. The 'Rose Buddy' mentoring system helps to forge that all important 'friendship connection' and encourages active engagement in the new members' area of interest. Many of my state's chapters have been successful using this model. It really works!"

Keeping Nancy Newmember

Once the prospect is a newly initiated member, how do we keep her? Whether the new member is extremely shy or very outgoing, our most important responsibility is to make sure she feels welcomed at every meeting.

Our brand new members need to start the process of building lifelong friendships from their very first meeting. We need to help them build connections with all the members so they experience the joy of friendship right away. Consider the following tips as you make plans for the initiation and *engagement* of these new members:

1. **Orientation.** During refreshments, the sponsor/ buddy/ big sister interviews the prospect to complete the two questions on the recommendation form. Help her determine what small job or committee she would like to do, answer any questions she may have, and get to know each other by sharing common interests, such as job, family, pets, hobbies, and favorite books.
2. **Initiation ceremony.** The sponsor will introduce the new member to the chapter by sharing a few interesting or unusual facts about her, as well as her teaching assignment, hobbies, and interests.
3. **First meeting.** The sponsor calls the new member and says, "I'll pick you up at 8:30 for our meeting on Saturday." On the ride together, they will continue to get to know each other through conversation about such things as music, funny school stories, food, or trips. The sponsor should not drag the new member all around the room introducing her to every single person. Instead, the sponsor should introduce her to just one or two new people. The new member should never have to walk into the room alone, wondering where to sit or searching for a familiar face. Be there to greet her or walk in with her.
4. **During the meeting.** All the members are involved at least 3 different ways so the new member is actively engaged and starting to recognize more names and faces. By participating she is also beginning to develop leadership confidence. Meetings need to be fun, not just sit and listen. Three easy ways to involve members at every meeting include singing a simple familiar song, an icebreaker, and having a shared discussion related to the program topic.

SONG: Search online for traditional children's songs. If you don't have a music teacher in your chapter, consider inviting one to membership.

ICEBREAKER: Search online for ice breakers, team builders, and energizers for ideas. Make sure that members move away briefly from their usual seats to talk with someone new.

DISCUSSION TOPIC: Members share ideas related to the program topic.

Other ways to involve members at a meeting include games, skits, etc. These three activities should be short, no more than 5 to 10 minutes, so you will have ample time to have a speaker and conduct business.

5. **Between meetings**, please keep in touch with each new member. The sponsor and the two members who have spent time with the new member can email or text greetings, have a phone conversation, meet for lunch, or offer to help with classroom needs. The sponsor could even send an e-card or send a little treat through campus mail, just to let her know that we care and are thinking about her.
6. **Subsequent meetings** throughout the year. The sponsor will continue to bring the new member to meetings and introduce her to one or two more members at each meeting. If the sponsor is not able to attend a meeting, she should call for a back-up sponsor, so the new member never feels lonely or unwelcomed. No matter how awesome the chapter programs are, a new member may not come back if she does not feel wanted. If the new member can't attend a meeting, the sponsor needs to call her afterward and tell her how much she was missed, plus give a brief recap of the meeting and information about the next meeting.
7. **Small jobs or committee assignment**. The new member chooses which small job or committee job she would like to do. Assign her to a partner doing the same job so they can work together, learning the job and getting to know each other. Small jobs work well for members who are not able to attend meetings, but can still feel a valuable part of the Society. She could send in a quote for the newsletter each month or work from home on the digital scrapbook.
8. **Helping with classroom**. If the new member is still teaching, offer to help with such things as setting up her classroom before school starts or helping her write a grant for classroom supplies or for professional development. Let her know you are available to help with lesson plans, observations, locating resources, etc.
9. **Summer**. Don't forget to stay in touch during the summer: email, call, take a class together, etc. Invite her to be your roommate at the convention.