



School Council Chairs Orientation and Bylaws Workshop

October 6, 2022

Welcome & Introductions

Rocky View Schools acknowledges the land and recognizes all of the Indigenous Peoples whose footsteps have marked these lands from time immemorial. Together, we can learn and honour the ways of knowing of Indigenous Peoples for all future generations.

Agenda

- Council Chairs Orientation Presentation
 - Role of School Council, Membership, Different Roles
 - Fundraising
 - Best Practices
 - Resources for School Councils
- Effective Bylaws Workshop
 - What are Bylaws / Purpose of Bylaws
 - Creating and Amending Bylaws
 - Tips and Suggestions
- Thank you & Good night!

What is a School Council?

- School councils are government legislated advisory groups that seek to enhance student learning by engaging and working collaboratively with parents, staff and community to support learning
- School councils are a way for parents and community members to work together with our schools to support and enhance student learning. At the school level, they help shape the delivery of education to children through ongoing feedback to school administrators.

Role of a School Council

- Roles taken on by school councils include:
 - Support school activities, including raising funds if desired
 - Advise principals and the Board of Trustees on matters related to schools
 - Provide liaison between the school and the community
 - Consult principals
 - Perform any function or duty required under government legislation or regulation, or delegated by the Board of Trustees

Role of School Council

- Roles **not** to be taken on by school councils include:
 - discussions about individual student behaviour
 - involvement in employment and staff issues
 - direction of school operations/management
 - the resolution of individual parent complaints

School Council Membership

- School Council membership is made up of:
 - Parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school
 - The Principal
 - At least one person who is a teacher at the school (often this is the Assistant Principal)
 - A student or students enrolled in the school (if a high school)
- A school council must have a Chair and any other members of executive as determined in the Bylaws/Operating Procedures

Role of School Council Chair

- The **School Council Chair**, the official spokesperson of school council, is key to council's success. Responsibilities include:
 - leading all school council meetings
 - ensuring that all council members participate and share their voice
 - working collaboratively with the school's principal to set meeting and plan meeting agendas
 - maintaining frequent communication with the principal and school community

Role of School Council Chair

- The chair also has the responsibility to prepare and provide an annual report to the Superintendent (board designate) by September 30th of each year (for the previous year) that:
 - summarizes the activities of the school council in the previous school year, and
 - details the receipt, handling and use of any money by the school council in the previous school year.
- Annual report template, and other school council resources, can be found at www.rockyview.ab.ca/get_involved/school_councils

Role of School Council Members

- As a **school council member**, it is important to:
 - attend school council meetings regularly and help create an inviting, collaborative environment
 - share professional knowledge, expertise and life experience
 - encourage feedback/participation from community and individuals
 - have a clear understanding of school council objectives
 - identify possible topics for agendas
 - recommend possible training sessions and professional learning

Role of Principal on School Council

- The **principal** is the instructional leader who manages the day-to-day operations of the school and is a key member on school council. Responsibilities include:
 - enabling the school council to provide input in the school's education plan and playbook, school fees and budget
 - seeking input from the school council on major decisions that affect the school
 - encouraging and supporting the formation and continuous improvement of school council

Role of Trustee with School Council

- **RVS School Board Trustees** are invited guests of school council meetings who:
 - attend meetings to share important information and receive feedback on educational matters at a divisional level.
 - bring the board's perspective and information to members of School Council
 - act as a source of information for:
 - procedural matters and system navigation
 - provincial and local educational initiatives

School Council & Fundraising

- Some school councils take an active role in raising money for their school.
 - hot lunch programs,
 - selling school swag,
 - walk-a-thons,
 - hot dog day,
 - cookie dough sales, and
 - a multitude of other activities and goods.

School Council & Fundraising

The School Councils Regulation

A school council may receive donations on behalf of a board, but no school council shall raise funds or otherwise solicit donations in any manner that would require a gaming license under the Gaming, Liquor and Cannabis Act.

*A school council must handle and report all money it receives, if any, in accordance with applicable policies and procedures of the board.
(School Council Regulation, Sec. 13)*

School Councils and Fundraising

- Funds raised by School Council:
 - must be held in an RVS bank account
 - are considered School Generated Funds (SGF)
- School councils can advise the Principal on how to spend these funds; final decision rests with Principal
 - Principal will provide the school council financial transaction reports

Fundraising Societies

- RVS rules do not apply to separate fundraising societies that are:
 - incorporated under the Societies Act,
 - eligible to apply for gaming licenses, and
 - are separate legal entities from the school council and the school division.
- Many RVS schools have a fundraising society. More information regarding fundraising societies can be found [here](#).

School Council Best Practices

- Communicate well on school website
 - minutes, meetings, dates, etc.
- Communicate with principal
 - consider regular meeting pattern between chair and principal
- Network with other councils
 - feeder schools & other similar schools
- Review [School Councils Best Practice Guide](#) on RVS website
- Try new things; be creative

Meeting Best Practices

- Agenda tips
 - consider time allotments
- Minutes
 - record of what was done, not what was said
 - record your decisions
- Robust discussion
 - okay to politely disagree
 - encourage participation
 - fairness so that all viewpoints may be shared

Meeting Best Practices

- Rules
 - meetings are informal but have structure
 - start a motion with the words “I move...”
 - vote on decisions
 - know and follow your bylaws
- Keep meetings moving
- Chair sets pace and tone for meeting

Celebrate Accomplishments

- Through regular communication and celebration, school councils can recognize and celebrate members' efforts and:
 - help parents see school council as representing all parents and understand and value the work that is done by school council.
 - help the parent community understand the value of fund-raised monies to the school
 - use opportunities at school events to remind stakeholders of initiatives, accomplishments and potential involvement in school council.

Resources for School Councils

- Education Act
- School Councils Regulation
- Alberta School Councils Association
- ASCA School Council Resource Guide
- RVS School Council Resource Manual
- RVS Administrative Procedure 110 – School Councils
- RVS Administrative Procedure 5119 – School Generated Funds

Alberta School Councils Association

- ASCA is your association (www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca)
 - all RVS schools are members; fees covered by RVS
- Significant source of resources:
 - workshops & speakers (e.g. purpose, policies and practices, operating procedures)
 - regulations & other resources
 - templates (e.g. agenda, minutes, bylaws)
 - Alberta School Councils Resource Guide

Any questions?

Effective School Council Bylaws

- Goals for today – That each participant will:
 - **Understand** what bylaws are and what could/should be included in them
 - **Encouragement** that bylaws should be simple and helpful for school councils
 - **Discuss** other ways to create rules and policies outside of bylaws.

What are Bylaws?

- Bylaws are a governing document outlining the most important operating rules of an organization
- Bylaws should only include rules that the organization desires to make more difficult to change

Hierarchy of Authority

- Education Act (highest)
- School Councils Regulation
- Rocky View Schools Policy or Procedures
 - including AP 110
- School Council Bylaws
- Council Adopted Rules of Order
- Common Parliamentary Procedure
- Custom (lowest)

The purpose of bylaws

- You likely won't think about your bylaws too often (that's good), but they are vitally important...
- Provides School Council with:
 - Governance oversight
 - Structure
 - Big picture direction
 - Clarity of rules
 - Protection of member's rights
 - Majority (right to decide through vote)
 - Minority (right to debate and influence decision)
 - Absentees (quorum, notice)

Bylaws should fit your context

- There is no perfect template for organizations to use for their bylaws
- There are many rights and a few wrongs
- Bylaws should change over time... not too often, not too infrequently

Bylaws or Operating Procedures?

- A School Council has the legal right (not obligation) to establish bylaws.
 - School Councils Regulation – Section 17
 - ASCA notes you may call your bylaws operating procedures if you wish:
 - Calling bylaws operating procedures does not make them less complex; the level of complexity is up to your council
 - They are still bylaws and they must still follow the law and your Council must still adhere to them

Bylaws vs. Other Rules

- Bylaws
 - Items that are unlikely to change for years
 - High level structure and protection
- Policies/Rules/Procedures/Custom
 - Items that are flexible and not as critical to be protected
 - Better placement for things such as:
 - Detailed job descriptions
 - Code of conduct
 - Cannot conflict with higher authorities

Bylaws could include:

- Regulations suggest...
 - **Calling of regular, special or annual meetings**
 - **Election of members of council and executive**
 - **Role of the chair and other executive**
 - **Number of times council **MUST** meet**
 - Location of meetings
 - **Quorum**
 - Conflict resolution process
- Regulations do not require any of the above nor limit any other items

Bylaws could include:

- ASCA adds:
 - Membership of the council
 - Committees
 - Description of meetings
 - Decision making style
 - **When AGM held and who attends**
 - Annual report details
 - **Method to amend bylaws**
 - Which officers have signing authority

ASCA Template

- ASCA provides helpful resource for Councils
- In the main resource guide find links to:
 - Operating procedures (bylaws) template
 - Operating procedures (bylaws) checklist
- These resources are very helpful but remember a template is only a guide... use what works best for your context

Important Tips

- Be wary of duplicating wording in higher authorities
- Use clear language
- “Will/Must” is different than “May/Should”
- Avoid the word “shall”
- Ask “Who should have the right to change this?”
- Include your principal in the process
- Review bylaws briefly each year
- KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Amending your Bylaws

- Your bylaws are in force from year to year
- The Regulation requires that to approve original bylaws or to amend bylaws that:
 - it must be done at a special meeting called for that purpose
 - approved by a majority vote of parents who attend that meeting and vote

How often should we amend/revise our bylaws?

- 3-7 years is likely sufficient
- Do not change/amend for the sake of change
- Reasons to amend include:
 - Changes from a higher authority (regs, RVS procedure)
 - Problems or issues that have emerged
 - Lack of clarity
 - New opportunities or circumstances

Council Adopted Rules of Order

- ASCA recommends use of a rules of order
- Powerful tool to solve meeting problems
- Likely better to approve outside of the bylaws
- Note: ASCA sample does not say how these get approved or revised
 - Can be by majority vote at any meeting
- Could include
 - Voting procedures
 - Election procedures
 - Meeting guidelines (how long on each item, conduct, how a motion can be made)

Communicate

- The following items should be easily accessible on your school website
 - Bylaws
 - Rules of Order
 - Policies & Procedures
 - Minutes

References

- School Councils Regulation
 - https://kings-printer.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2019_094.pdf
- ASCA School Council Resource Guide
 - <https://www.albertaschoolcouncils.ca/public/download/files/181387>

Any questions?

Thank You and Good Night!

Upcoming Joint Board/School Council Meetings

- Thu Oct 27, 2022 @ 5:30pm
- Thu Mar 23, 2023 @ 5:30pm