



School Council Chairs Orientation

September 23, 2024

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
 - School Councils and Money
 - Best Practices
 - Resources for School Councils
 - Q&A
- Bylaws Workshop with Trustee Todd Brand
- 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; and
 - 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; and
 - 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); and
 - If a high school, a student or students enrolled in the school (encouraged, not required).
- 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; and
 - 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.
- Annual report template, and other school council resources, can be found at <https://www.rockyview.ab.ca/get-involved/school-councils>.
- Financial information can be obtained through your school's administration.



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; and
 - 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, 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; and
 - Working collaboratively with the School Council Chair to set meeting and plan meeting agendas.

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 and
 - Provincial and local educational initiatives.

School Council Funds

School budgets include an amount of \$260 of general revenue for school councils to spend annually to support their work. Some of the possible uses for these funds are:

- Child minding during meetings
- Meeting snacks
- Top up the ASCE grant for some council learning
- Donate back to the school for anything
- Pay a portion of expenses for a member attend ASCA conference

School Council Funds

\$500 Annual ASCE Grant.

This grant provides funding to school authorities for each school in order to support school councils fulfilling their legislated responsibilities in the education system and enhancing parent involvement and engagement.

- All funds must be spent in year received, any unused funds must be returned to Alberta Education.
- School councils must report annually to the Board on how the grant was handled and used.

School Council Funds

\$500 Annual ASCE Grant

- RVS will provide the funding to each school directly.
- Funds must not be directed to registered fundraising societies.
- The decisions for the use of the funds must be made by the school councils and recorded in council minutes.
- Funds are to be used to support school councils in fulfilling their legislated responsibilities and for parent involvement and engagement activities.

School Council Funds

\$500 Annual ASCE Grant - Allowable use of Funds

- Parent engagement activities and projects;
- Workshops, such as ones offered by ASCA, for parents to increase capacity for school council members;
- Information sessions on how parents can support student learning at home and at school;
- Parent resources and workshops on important topics such as, mental health and wellbeing, cyber bullying, healthy living, etc.;

School Council Funds

\$500 Annual ASCE Grant - Allowable use of Funds (continued)

- Programs to support multi-cultural and Indigenous families including, English language learners and First Nations, Metis and Inuit learners;
- Parent resources and tools in multiple languages;
- Events to engage parents on important local issues;
- Parent engagement in promoting the value of arts; or
- Trainer/facilitator costs for the professional development, workshops or sessions associated with the above.

School Council Funds

\$500 Annual ASCE Grant – Non-Allowable use of Funds

- Entertainment costs, meals, snacks, other food;
- No capital asset purchases;
- Activities that have already taken place;
- Organization memberships or conference fees;
- Fundraising events;
- Prizes or incentives to parents and/or students;
- Payment to school board staff including honoraria, gifts; or
- Entertainment activities such as barbeques, volunteer teas, movie nights, dances, concerts or performances, etc.

School Council Funds

- 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 Funds

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 Funds

- Funds raised by School Council:
 - Must be held in an RVS bank account
 - Are considered School Generated Funds (SGF)
 - Are permitted to use SchoolCash Online to collect the funds
- 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](#).
- Fundraising societies **cannot** use SchoolCash Online to collect funds

School Council Email Addresses

- In order to support school council chairs, enhance communication between and to chairs, and facilitate transition between chairs, RVS provides the option for each school council to have a generic rvschools.ab.ca email address.
- Principals will ask School Council Chairs to complete forms AF1 10-A E-mail Account & Information Sharing Consent and AF1 40-C Responsible Use of Technology. Once completed, Principals will submit the required forms and will share the email address and password.
- Chairs are encouraged to use this new service but are not required. Please be aware that when RVS has events for school councils, we will be sending information to chairs via these generic email addresses.

School Council Best Practices

- Communicate well on school website
 - Share meeting agenda, dates, minutes, etc.
- Communicate with principal
 - Consider regularly meeting with principal to develop meeting agenda.
- Network with other councils
 - Feeder schools & other similar schools.
- Review School Councils Best Practice Guide on RVS website
- Encourage a sense of community
 - Consider hosting staff appreciation meals during school conferences and PL days, as well as celebrating Teacher Appreciation Week.

Meeting Best Practices

- Agenda tips
 - Consider time allotments.
 - Include topics that are engaging/relevant within your community.
- Minutes
 - Record of what was done, not what was said.
 - Vote on, and record your decisions.
 - Vote on, and record any spending of funds.
- Robust discussion
 - Okay to politely disagree.
 - Encourage participation.
 - Fairness so that all viewpoints may be shared.

Meeting Best Practices

- Chair sets pace and tone for meeting.
- Keep meetings moving.
- Consider creating committees where more in depth discussion is required.
- Meetings are informal but have structure.
- Vote on decisions.
- Start a motion with the words “I move...”.
- Know and follow your bylaws.

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?



School Councils Bylaws

Effective School Council Bylaws

- Goals for today – That each participant will:
 - **Understand** what bylaws are and what could/should be included
 - **Encouragement** that bylaws should be simple and helpful
 - **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)

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 place 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 is held and who attends**
 - Annual report details
 - **Method to amend bylaws**
 - Which officers have signing authority

ASCA Template

- ASCA provides a 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 Meeting

- Thu Oct 24, 2024 @ 5:30pm in person at Education Centre in Airdrie.

We welcome and encourage members of your School Council Executive to attend.

Please remember to RSVP!