



SCHOOL COUNCIL Best Practice Guide

Rocky View Schools

APRIL 2016





TABLE OF CONTENTS

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE INTRODUCTION.....1

TOPIC 1 - COMMUNICATION PRACTICES.....2

TOPIC 2 - MEETING TOPICS THAT ENGAGE PARENTS.....4

TOPIC 3 - PARENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES.....7

TOPIC 4 - MEETING ACCESSIBILITY.....9

TOPIC 5 - RECOGNIZING VOLUNTEERS.....10

TOPIC 6 - SCHOOL COUNCIL VISIBILITY.....11

THANK YOU

We would like to acknowledge and thank the School Council members from the schools listed below for their time, commitment and expertise in helping to develop the Best Practice Guide as follows:

*A.E. Bowers Elementary
Bert Church High
Chestermere Lake Middle
Chestermere High
Ecole Edwards Elementary
Elbow Valley Elementary
Glenbow Elementary
Herons Crossing
Prairie Waters Elementary
Prince of Peace Lutheran
Rainbow Creek Elementary
Springbank Community High
W.H. Croxford High*

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

When parents are informed and involved in their children's school, it has a positive impact on their children's attitude and performance. Parents' awareness and interest in their children's learning and school activities models the importance of school that leads to positive results for their children. Parental involvement can have a positive impact on students' academic performance at all grade levels.

School Councils play an invaluable role in providing parents with opportunities for meaningful involvement in their children's school. School Councils encourage a strong partnership between the school and the family and help parents become actively involved in the education of their children. School Councils have implemented strategies, practices and activities which have created the conditions for parents to engage in their child's education and have reduced barriers for parents who find involvement more challenging. In Rocky View Schools, the work of School Councils is helping good schools become even better.

The intent of the Rocky View Schools - School Council Effective Practice Guide is to provide a resource of the practices and activities that have been utilized by RVS School Councils to engage and support parents in ensuring student success. The school name of the effective practice/activity it was originated from is indicated if further information is required.



SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 1 - Communication Practices

Ecole Edwards Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Various Communication Tools

Description:

Communicating information in as many ways as possible. FaceBook, reminder text system, newsletters, email, agenda stickers.

Chestermere High School

Practice/Activity: Create an Email List of Interested Parents

Description:

Great time to collect parent/student information is the first- year Student Orientation. Afterwards, a note is sent home regarding what took place, upcoming events and a request for topic ideas, opinions, etc. This way even if parents cannot attend a meeting, they feel connected.

Ecole Elbow Valley Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Technology to Communicate

Description:

Elbow Valley School has a significant percentage of the student population that utilizes buses. Notice of meetings is posted in the monthly newsletter to parents. As well, the meeting agenda is posted on the school's door ensuring that parents are aware of the meetings/key agenda items that may impact their family. Consequently, they use the power of technology to engage with parents in different ways. Recently, we identified the need to send email reminders to parents when we have important discussion topics at Council such as the Strategic Plan. As well, we are in the process of developing a Twitter strategy to keep parents up to date.

Prairie Waters Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Social Media/Technology

Description:

Utilizing Social Media; Twitter, email and Facebook, to ensure parents are aware of upcoming meetings/events.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE



Topic 1 - Communication Practices (Cont'd.)

Bert Church High School

Practice/Activity: Text Reminder System

Description:

Parents who enroll have text reminders sent to them from School Council regarding upcoming meetings/events.

Glenbow Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Be Transparent/Get Information Out

Description:

Ensure to send out important information to the parent population via email about upcoming events.

Practice/Activity: Open-Door Policy

Description:

Welcome and appreciate all parents and keep lines of communication open.

W.H. Croxford High School

Practice/Activity: Social Media

Description:

Utilizing Social Media tools such as Twitter and Facebook as ways to communicate with parents about upcoming meetings/events. Utilizing tool "Remind 101" which sends a text to remind parents of upcoming event.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 2 - Meeting Topics that Engage Parents

Rainbow Creek Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Council Focus Topics

Description:

School Council chooses a topic and publishes it in advance. Topics include safety/lockdown procedures where administration, R.C.M.P., and teachers talk about what those procedures look like. Other topics include: leadership in the school, community involvement, technology in the schools, etc.

Glenbow Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Guest Speakers

Description:

Invite teachers to discuss certain topics, i.e. literacy, 'We Read', curriculum, etc. and inform parents of the opportunity to attend and ask questions.

Chestermere High School

Practice/Activity: Have "Focus Topics" of Interest at School Council Meetings and Workshops

Description:

School Council Meeting:

- What does parental involvement look like in high school?
- What does a graduate of Chestermere High School look like?

Workshop:

- 3-P Parenting workshop in Middle School

Herons Crossing

Practice/Activity: Guest speakers

Description:

Guest speakers for various topics prior to School Council meetings, i.e. Intro to PowerSchool for Gr. 5 students; Art Gala, etc.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 2 - Meeting Topics that Engage Parents (Cont'd.)

Herons Crossing

Practice/Activity: Teacher Hosts/Rooms

Description:

Each month a different teacher hosts the School Council meeting in their classroom and provides a presentation regarding teaching and learning.

Springbank Community High School

Practice/Activity: Curriculum Presentations

Description:

For each of our School Council meetings, we have a curriculum presentation to foster parent understanding of the work their students are doing and provide details of the core and complementary curriculum. The academic team leaders prepare the presentations and are available for questions/answers at the meetings.

Practice/Activity: Sharing of Professional Resources with School Council/Parents in General

Description:

At each School Council meeting, we share a professional article that will be of potential value or interest for parents, i.e. "A Neuroscientist's Survival Guide to the Teenage Brain". Additionally, we share learning opportunities offered through Alberta Health Services through our weekly flyer that goes home to parents, i.e. Video Game Use and Abuse, Kids Have Stress Too!

Ecole Edwards Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Information/Fun Activity Nights or Days

Description:

Informing parents of upcoming learning opportunities that will be occurring at School Council Meetings that directly connects to what is happening in class. Topics have included Literacy/numeracy evenings, information regarding '7 Habits of Highly Effective People', leadership day, Halloween story night.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 2 - Meeting Topics that Engage Parents (Cont'd.)

A.E. Bowers Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Emphasis on the value of the information that come from Meetings

Description:

By having a teacher representative attend School Council meetings with something to share from all the classes, the focus of each meeting comes back to the children. Parents enjoy seeing pictures of, and hearing about, what their children have been doing over the last month. The teachers' communication keeps the conversation going between the parents, teachers and students.

Ecole Elbow Valley Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Demonstration of student work at School Council Meetings

Description:

When School Council meetings occur during school hours (bi-monthly), we welcome one or two student groups to demonstrate specific examples of how they are experiencing the curriculum. Parents thoroughly enjoy these presentations that students are excited to present. Two examples of this are: 1) Grade 4 students who used beads and mementos woven together to create a tactile story framework and, 2) Grade 3 students who worked together to compile ideas for a Learning Commons.

Practice/Activity: Creation of a School Council Strategic Plan and Parent Surveys

Description:

Our School Council has recently implemented a strategic planning process with a view to identifying some long-term projects they can work towards. This project resonates with parents and as a result, we expect parent participation in Council discussions to increase. We plan to re-visit the Strategic Plan each year to maintain its relevance. As part of the Strategic Planning process, we will send out Parent Surveys to assess the ways in which Council serves the school population. Parent surveys are conducted every 2-3 years and we always get great response rates. For our next survey, we plan to utilize online tools as opposed to written responses.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 3 - Parent Volunteer Opportunities

Herons Crossing School

Practice/Activity: Volunteer Coordinator

Description:

Focused Volunteer Coordinator who works from home to create spreadsheet that outlines the skills, abilities and interests of parents. Teachers utilize this list to bring in parents as resources for their classes.

Practice/Activity: Volunteer Form Database

Description:

Using a Google form, we have created an interest form for volunteering that populates into a database.

Bert Church High School

Practice/Activity: Parent Ambassadors

Description:

Outfitting parents that are involved in other areas of schools, i.e. sports, band, drama, etc. so that they are identified as being a resource at the school.

Springbank Community High School

Practice/Activity: Career Week/Day Collaborative Work

Description:

Partner with and access expertise of parents and community to support student learning regarding career exploration, i.e. Career day/week sessions provided by local parent experts, sharing their experience, and expertise with our students.

Prairie Waters Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Lunch Talks

Description:

During lunch hours on Fridays, parents and community members go to the school's Learning Commons and share their experiences, ideas and passions with students.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 3 - Parent Volunteer Opportunities (Cont'd.)

A.E. Bowers Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Focus on the Communication and Co-ordination of Opportunities to be Involved

Description:

At the commencement of the school year, we go out of our way to communicate to parents about the many opportunities they may be involved at A.E. Bowers. Through orientations, Open Houses, and various materials that are sent home, parents learn about 'Helping Hands', volunteering in the classrooms, field trips, etc. Parents are informed about how to volunteer including the necessary forms. We have established an email list that helps us to communicate and coordinate our activities. Our Volunteer Coordinator works with the front office staff to send electronic reminders for School Council meetings, etc.

Rainbow Creek Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Volunteer Sheet

Description:

Parents do not volunteer when they don't know what the commitment level is. We have a sheet where specific opportunities are described with time and effort commitment levels, whether it can be done at home or at school, and what the benefit is to the school and their child, i.e. bake sale gives us money to subsidize field trips.

W.H. Croxford High School

Practice/Activity: Career Information

Description:

'World of Work' evening/'Lunch Talks' where parents and community members are invited to discuss their jobs, training required, etc. to help student understand various career choices.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 4 - Meeting Accessibility

Ecole Edwards Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Make meetings easier to attend and more enjoyable

Description:

- Visible signage around in the school
- FaceBook, reminder texts/newsletters reminders
- Childcare at meetings
- 6:30 p.m. start and always remain on time
- Keep meetings to one hour unless it is an information night
- Administration and school trustee are always in attendance

A.E. Bowers Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Accessibility/Convenience for Families/"No Excuses" Practice

Description:

We have opted to start our School Council meetings at an earlier time, as well as to provide childcare in an effort to make meetings 'easy' for parents to attend. By starting our meetings at 6:30 p.m., families are able to get there from work/other activities and have their children in bed at a reasonable time.

Chestermere High School

Practice/Activity: Running Time-Efficient Meetings

Description:

Try not to get distracted by other issues/tangents or the 'routine' of meetings, i.e. agenda, minutes, etc. Parents want to know that important information is covered and what time that meeting will conclude.

No School Identified

Practice/Activity: Childcare at School Council Meetings

Description:

Advertising to encourage older students who have completed the "Babysitting Course" to provide free childcare so parents can attend School Council meetings.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE



Topic 5 - Recognizing Volunteers

A.E. Bowers Elementary School

Practice/Activity: Celebrating Parents as Partners

Description:

We ensure parents know they are welcome and are a valued partner at school. We do this by encouraging parents to share their skills and talents with the school community. We make it clear that any amount of time that parents are able to contribute not only greatly benefits their own child but our school population as a community. We host a Volunteer Tea as another opportunity to celebrate the efforts that parents have been able to make throughout the year. It's an opportunity for us to be together for a little while...just as adults!

Prince of Peace Lutheran School

Practice/Activity: Volunteer Dessert/Tea

Description:

Hosted by the School Council for all volunteers who assist with field trips, hot lunch, home reading, etc.

SCHOOL COUNCIL BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Topic 6 - School Council Visibility

Chestermere Lake Middle School

Practice/Activity: Liaison from Feeder Schools into High School

Description:

A parent volunteer that liaisons between Rainbow Creek & Prairie Waters to help with the communication between the schools to transition students from elementary to middle school.

Help communicate Annual General Meeting dates and make parents aware of upcoming activities at the school.

Liaison to high school from middle school and present at Orientation Night. Send out personal invitations.

Hérons Crossing School

Practice/Activity: Council Visibility

Description:

Opportunities to speak to parents at events other than School Council Meetings, i.e. open houses, learner conferences, etc.

Have a School Council pamphlet prepared to be passed out at events.

Notice board with pictures of School Council Members so they are easily identified in the school community.

W.H. Croxford High School

Practice/Activity: Parent Ambassador

Description:

Creation of a parent ambassador role identifiable in the community in order to send messages to parents who are actively involved in the high school.