



# School Councils Bylaws Workshop

May 23, 2023

## 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

- Effective Bylaws Workshop
  - What are Bylaws / Purpose of Bylaws
  - Creating and Amending Bylaws
  - Tips and Suggestions
  - Q&A
- Thank you & Good night!

## 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](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!**