

notes

Council of School Councils Meeting

Thursday, Oct. 25, 2012
6:45 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.
Education Centre
Multi-purpose Room

The following discussion questions were used to frame the conversation at each table group:

- **How do you want trustees to communicate with school councils and with parents?**
- **How do you, as school council chairs (or designates), want to communicate with trustees?**
- **What has your school council done to increase participation, etc.? What is your best advice to other school council groups?**
- **How do you want to communicate with each other?**

Summary Responses

1. **How do you want trustees to communicate with school councils and with parents?**
2. **How do you, as school council chairs (or designates), want to communicate with trustees?**
 - Use as many ways as possible
 - Face to face when possible
 - Have a parent information night for all parents
 - Contact through the school principal
 - All parents should receive all of the information
 - Use student agendas to provide information – Challenge is that not all schools use agendas
 - Use social media to invite parents to share ideas
 - CBE Facebook
 - Facebook
 - Use of social media to measure audience involvement – Facebook is not good for complex conversations
 - Collect school council emails in Area to share with other school councils
 - Can't school councils have "a box that you check off" to say they are willing to give out their email address
 - Up to date email addresses for school council chairs
 - We know you can contact trustee and be heard when needed
 - Telephone calls re issues
 - Not broke/ don't fix it **but** trustees to be available when needed.

- Create a safe environment for parents to speak/express concerns
- Trustee/School Council forum
- Meetings
 - Do we need more meetings?
 - Dissect Elementary/Middle/HS for communication – would like more meetings, but split into divisions
 - Trustee regional meetings
 - Large meetings – good for global issues
 - Small meeting groups with a trustee
 - Group mentioned they liked format of having an hour presentation and an hour for further discussion/their opportunity to connect with one another
 - System wide meeting on a specific/relevant topic: fees/bullying/controversial issue, etc.
 - Coffee meeting
 - Town hall meetings with each school
 - Trustees gather schools for meetings, by geography/languages/types of programs
 - Meetings by ward
 - Meetings should have a topic – i.e. technology, education act, funding formula, etc.
- Every trustee to visit each of their schools each year
 - Trustee visits to school council
 - Trustee to attend student assemblies
 - Trustee to attend school events
- On Line
 - Trustee could ask a question of the month, online, and ask parents to respond
 - Blogging with school council on websites
 - Webcast of meetings are ineffective
 - RSS feed
 - Trustee information on our school website, (includes contact information)
 - Message boards for questions and answers
- Personal Invitation/Email
 - Trustee to school councils – get out with a question
 - Push out emails with links
 - Monthly emails – What is going on
 - Concise emails

- All trustees to send annual letters to all school councils, introduce self, contact information
- Email communication
 - Push
 - Short
 - Who is it from
 - Why is it important
 - Where can I get more information
 - Who can I call
- Handbook materials and resources at beginning of school year or end of year/provide specific examples to chairs of school issues that were resolved
- General Information – Education night, networking engaging advocacy – get information from trustees directly
- USB materials for school council leadership transition
- Mentorship program
- Reminder letter that trustees are available as a resource

3. How do you want to communicate with each other?

- September - school council forum
- Parents want to talk to one another about issues
- School Councils want the contact information of other school councils so that they can contact them
- Webinars – locally
- Individual ward meetings
- Local Division meetings
- Want meetings between and with one another
- Differentiated resources/meetings for elementary, junior, senior high school councils
- Liaise with CAPSC

4. What has your school council done to increase participation, etc.? What is your best advice to other school council groups?

- Council speaks at Kindergarten orientation personal notebooks for all Kindergarten families “take note”
- Draw in from the kids – student activities, council members talk to parents
- Executive members do not sit together and must talk to newbies when hosting school council events
- Family movie night every two months at school
- If all is well is that why parents don’t come out?
- 1% of the population engages in school council - How do you engage the other 99%?
- Don’t want to drag parents out to school council meetings
- Send out school council agendas = bcc everyone
- Group photo of school councils – posted in the school with the caption: “Ask us what we do”
- Website – school council minutes, invite comments from those who can’t make it to the meeting
- Timing of meetings
- Food with meetings
- Food – has not worked
- Babysitting/child care at meetings – use leadership students
- \$2.00 Grade 5/6 student to be babysitter
- Email list / principal sends school council chair message
- Short messages
- Education night; mother/girls night; boy/dad nights; sex education, drugs, social media and safety, SRO
- Brightly colored message in backpacks
- Parent education presentations
- Student advisory presentations

5. Other

- Trustees
 - Defined role description for trustees
 - Trustees need to be more proactive
 - Trustees need to be more approachable

- School councils need to know how to run meetings efficiently, quickly
- No consistency when information comes
- School council own email – school council chair@cbe.ab.ca
- Building and maintaining contacts
- Apps – all questions
- Secretary's name is appears often on the emails that are sent to parents from the School, as she is the one sending out the message. If the parent does not recognize the name, they may not open the email or respond as quickly as may be required. Could the school name appear on messages sent from the administration, rather than an individual's name?
- Individual school websites not up to date and takes too long
- ESL/ELL – translation – see as an issue
- Lack of manpower is important and necessary to maintain communication. Up to date school websites is a must
- Workshop for school council chair and principals – how to work together (do not hold this meeting in the school)
- What if school council does not support the decision of a principal?
- Email from school council to parents
- Keep meeting short/concise

6. What do you want to talk to Trustees about:

- Accountabilities
- Who is responsible for what? Trustee, CBE, AB Government
Parents expressed concern when one group says it is the other's responsibility – finger pointing not helpful to parents
- Key communicators – what is their role, let us know what you are talking about with respect to the future of key communicators.
- Help other councils
- List serve i.e. get information on issue – insurance/playground
- Parents want insider information – what is the Board doing right now?
- Information ahead of time
- Resurface tennis courts – who is responsible? Trying to work this through as an example of accountabilities
- Why does everything have to be approved? i.e. grounds/website



- Provincial Achievement Tests –future? Look at weighting for Grade 12.
- Tools for individual learning – not there, nor is the funding

