



Please share with your table group the challenges and successes that your School Council has encountered

Table 1

Challenges

- Getting a Casino
- Communication with diverse ELL parents
 - One to One invites
 - Personal communications
 - Transition/open houses/PTS
- Need a clear identification of benefits from school council
- Range of what school councils do/involve with
- Challenges with economy – stress for school fees, feeding students
- Difficulty with school council attendance
 - Food
 - Be creative – Call it something else
 - Variety of message formats, meeting times (daytime vs night)
 - Information presentations
 - Changing it “from a meeting” to an Information/Education discussion
 - Teacher + Principal reports sent out to school communities ahead of meeting – one day notice
 - Volunteer bank – Certificate to be used for CVs, job applications
 - Interpreters – community leaders
 - Need Principal support + buy in
 - Wide email usage – market more participation
 - “Topic of the Month” – 15 minutes coaching/presentation/education issue
 - Principals do not always encourage participation
 - Must be engaging + two-way dialogue

- Timed agenda with time management and meeting management (1 hour max)
- Highlight different projects or programs students are involved with
- School council brochures at P/T interviews/Open Houses
- Need clear identification of benefits from School Council
- Community Reps - updates

Successes

- Success with fundraisers
 - “Steeped Tea”, food for students, flower baskets, on-line tool
- Involvement with Food Bank Partner/”Healthy Hunger”
- Academic Committee re: Student Results meeting with principal

Table 2

Challenges

- Attendance at Council
- Understanding bylaws + council organization
- Relationship with leadership
- Validating the peoples’ time is important
- Feedback needs to be acted on
- Engagement with parents from a variety of cultures (welcoming)

Ideas

- TelusWise
- Tom Keenan (UofC) – Techocreep

Successes

- Attendance
 - Role definition with time definition
 - Maximum time
 - Target kindergarten parents
 - Offer babysitting
 - Move meeting (some afternoon, some evening)

- Guest speakers
 - PM – Parent Coffee, BBQ, Pancake Breakfast
- Alberta School Council's Association
- GSA – students to council - asking for support (backing)
- Student at cCouncil (high school)
- Top-ten list of what students valued about school (made word cloud)
- Facebook page
- Open & welcoming
- Need a common purpose – rally around student success and need
- Come for Ideas/like food/captivating agenda/open invitation/
- Controversy – tension brings out folk
- Weekly update from Administration (email)
- Blog: budget data, school council dates, speakers

Table 3

Successes

- Send out agenda through the principal to the whole school a week prior to the meeting
- Coordinate communications with the principal to reduce the number of emails to one per week
- Hold an “engagement” meeting to see how parents are feeling about communication/engagement at the school/ways to improve
- School council presence at school events
- Use online volunteer sign up (Sign up genius)
- When parents are concerned about an issue, be proactive and engage and bring the decision makers
- Involve parents in big projects
- High school parents like information meetings on topics of interest (and might stay for council meeting)
- Collect emails through beginning of year welcome package – can send out messages that CBE can't; can see stats on those messages in Mail Chimp
- Have a buddy system (executive + newcomer)
- Elementary parents like info nights, too
- Add a council meeting onto an info night
- Developed a babysitting training course for Grade 5/6 who then provide free babysitting during council meetings which increased turnout

- Don't use paper with HS students – it doesn't get home
- Send a mail out where parents can find out how to participate in school council, find more info, have good webpage
- Have “swag” for parents (e.g. school jackets for parents)
- School council Facebook page
- Info nights on stress/anxiety with psychiatrist
- Support parents in roles – succession planning
- Have kids present, then parents will come
- Annual pancake breakfast to build community. If at the end of year, include families coming to the school next year.
- “Maker event” where parents participate in learning around new learning commons
- Have students organize activities for Hallowe'en dance
- Literacy night with potluck
- Food

Challenges

- Getting different people involved
- Build community
- How to use the talents/resources of parents in the school
- Communicating with parents with limited English

Table 4 (Wards 12 & 14)

Successes

- Parent email sign-up on Mail Chimp
- Facebook page
- Email/contact opt-in form sent home at the beginning of the year (with fee information) ASCA has the exact form
- Text Message/email – remind 101
- School council blog – link from main CBE school site
- Invites sent out by the Principal (works when timely)
- Community link – Facebook page, post on community page
- Sticker w/date and time of next School Council meeting sent home “stuck” on “Kindie” students
- School Council make a “pitch” at kindergarten registration eves
- First meeting of the year held in evening, all others held during the day

- Childcare sometimes help
- Get “Buy-in” via the class coordinator (to build email contact list) – send emails via this trusted contact
- Sign up genius works well – volunteer spot
- CAPSC has some good sessions on how to chair, resolve conflict in meetings
- Room on the agenda for “open questions”. Keep it on time – Don’t skip the open time
- Surveys – good feedback from parents – weave in the wood work School Council is doing and as “what do you wish we talked about?”
- Pick one bylaw for each meeting to review and revisit

Challenges

- How to contact parents – getting to them the first time
- Cutting through “the noise”
- Finding time (for parents)
- If happy, don’t always come to school council
- K-4/middles not always as invested as K-6 (when there for longer)
- Disagreements between council members
- Change – Parent body changes (and so does the community)
- Bylaws – when to review, what should be in them, best practices
- Policies/expectations on how things will be communicated
- Happy to “opt in” to email each and every year. – Starting from scratch each year
- Support from the school is not always there

Table 5

Successes

- Cultural integration
- Open communication, sharing contacts
- Various forms of communication: email (need privacy approval), social media
- Principals disseminating information to parents. Involved in school council
- Students take on leadership roles
- Incentivization
- Create a “village”

Challenges

- Attendance
- Parent involvement
- Parents feeling isolated from decision
- Opportunity for collaboration
- Integrating parents of special needs students
- Volunteer support
- Leadership changes
- Diversity of where students come from
- Diminishing attendance as children age
- Getting kindergarten parents involved
- Promote programs the school offers. Parents knowing what's available (strengths)
- Integration of parents in different programs at same school
- “entrenched” school council parents
- Finding the accountable person
- Diversity of representation
- Ensuring continuation – succession models

Table 6

Communicate

- how the system works (CBE – AB Ed – Schools)
- principal plays a keyrole
- having strong leadership on council – open and honest
- Kindergarten orientation / indoctrination
- Community contacts
- Ask

Idea

- Council Alternative Programs School Councils?
 - Alternative program schools have unique challenges
 - We need engagement models tailored to levels and programs

Table 7 (Wards 11 & 13)

Successes

- Refugees
 - learned from it
 - [Kingsland (Christine)] CBE accept responsibility for communication gap and deal well with
 - Kids enjoying cultural learning
- Smooth running school Administration makes school council smooth
- Built new learning commons – CIP Grant
- Welcome meal: breakfast/lunch
- Fiesta every year – 1,500 people
- Fun lunch delivered twice/week

Challenges

- Refugees
 - Communication, timeline learning about refugees
- Parent Engagement
 - Unless an issue, don't engage
 - School council website
 - How much time to invest into getting into engagement
 - Trustee + community issues discussed at meetings to get parents involved
 - Speakers help
- Parents too far away because Spanish Language school is in SW
- Bus – stop not near parking lot hard on parents
- Parents don't know enough about CBE, structure, what kids are dealing with, new ways of teaching, (The world is different) the teaching methods are different than previous.